A black and white illustration of a ship's deck. Four men in light-colored shirts and dark trousers are working together to move a large, light-colored object, possibly a life raft or a large bag, over the side of the ship. The ship's hull is visible, with a small window and rigging lines. The scene is set against a dark, possibly night-time background.

*A story of life on  
the Mississippi*

*The*  
ADVENTURES OF  
WILLIAM TUCKER

*By*  
GEORGE HALSEY GILLHAM



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## THE ADVENTURES OF WILLIAM TUCKER

*By George Halsey Gillham*

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EVERY one who likes Huckleberry Finn will like William Tucker and the story of his life on the Mississippi, told, as the author says, 'sunny side up.'

Embarked on a shantyboat, William Tucker and his friends find that things happen with startling rapidity. The buried treasure that was treasure after all; the mysterious house in the clearing; the bear hunt; the runaway train; the goat; the parrot; the 'chill-medicine'; the escape to the barges; the exploits of the amateur detectives; the trap for Hamon; the flying suit-case full of money — all are told with a wonderful mixture of seriousness and irresponsibility that is boyhood at its finest.

*Illustrated by Rodney Thomson*

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*The*  
ADVENTURES OF  
WILLIAM TUCKER



GEORGE HALSEY GILLHAM



*O. P. sent to R. R. L. 2/14/41*

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**THE ADVENTURES OF  
WILLIAM TUCKER**













THE HEAVY SUIT-CASE CRASHED ON DOWN THE STEEP STEPS



# THE ADVENTURES OF WILLIAM TUCKER

*In a Shantyboat on the Mississippi*

BY  
GEORGE HALSEY GILLHAM

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
RODNEY THOMSON



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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## DEDICATION

As a slight token of my appreciation of many kindnesses, this book is respectfully dedicated to the editors of *The Youth's Companion*, in which, as a serial, this story first saw the light.

I am especially indebted to Mr. Ira Rich Kent, of Boston, who, as editor of the *Companion*, and later as representative of the publishers of this volume, has given me most valuable suggestions and advice.







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Drawings by Rodney Thomson







# THE ADVENTURES OF WILLIAM TUCKER

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## CHAPTER I

### *Hicks and the House Boat*

ONE summer afternoon John Guheen, Charley Kerr, and I went down to Wolf River, which flows into the Mississippi just north of Memphis. This stream was lined with shantyboats and with towboats that the lumber companies used for towing rafts of logs. There were also the small gasoline boats with little stern wheels which were used on small rivers to bring out farm produce and take back groceries and other freight. Here was the boat-club building, propped up on stilts to keep it out of the high water. It was surrounded by a fine collection of pleasure launches, some of which would run and some of which, we knew, would run only when they took a notion.

As we sauntered up the bank in the shade of the willow trees, we saw a long blue shantyboat that at once attracted our attention. It



## The Adventures of William Tucker

was a beauty. Seated on the bow of this boat was a man with a wooden leg. He was about middle age and middle size, and was smiling pleasantly. As we ventured a little closer and stopped, I remarked:

‘Good-evenin’.

‘Good-evenin’,’ answered peg-leg. ‘Would you gentlemen like to come aboard?’

He had not only invited us to come on his boat, but he had called us gentlemen. We were not babies, neither were we exactly grown, so this shantyboat man with the winning smile gained favor with us at once. We expressed our desire to ‘come aboard,’ and up the plank we walked.

‘Hicks is my name,’ said he of the wooden leg, as he shook hands with each of us. He was somewhat bald, and his face was round and rather weak about the mouth. His nose was too red. His best point was his contagious smile.

We soon became acquainted, and as Hicks showed us the manifold advantages of his craft, our enthusiasm increased.

The Hicks shantyboat was about forty feet long by twelve feet wide. It had a little deck at both the bow and stern, and a small walkway hardly a foot wide along the sides, with a



## Hicks and the House Boat

handrail near the top of the cabin so that the navigators could walk all round it.

The cabin was the thing with which we were infatuated. It was about seven feet in height and extended over the whole boat except the small decks forward and aft. When you went into the cabin it looked very long and spacious. There was a good little wood-burning cooking-stove, with an oven, an ice-box, a fine sky-blue water-cooler, with a large red rose painted on each side, and four beds, or cots, which were on hinges and turned up against the wall in the daytime and were let down at night. There was a glass door at each end and on each side three little windows which were curtained with calico or some such stuff. There was also a nice little skiff and oars, which we could see floating behind on a line.

This outfit may have had its limitations, but we could not see them then. It looked extremely good to us. It was 'love at first sight.'

We were so entranced that we remained and ate supper with Hicks. Everything Hicks did was rose-tinged with romance. He fried the fish right there in the boat. The skillet may not have been very clean, but we never thought about that. He pulled down a mysterious



## The Adventures of William Tucker

swinging board, with one leg, for a dining-table, and we sat down to a royal feast.

After supper there was much talk, and finally Hicks dropped his voice to a whisper, and drawing up close, said:

‘The facts are I own a farm in Iowa on which there is a mortgage. This mortgage is coming due in a few days and I just natcherly ain’t got the funds at present to meet it. It nearly breaks my heart to say it, but I am compelled to sell this here beautiful floating palace.’

Hicks stated that for this reason he was willing to sell his boat for a song — a mere pittance — really the same as giving it away. He was willing to let us have the boat for two hundred dollars in cash.

We told Hicks we would give him our decision next day. We started on home, but were all in a fever of excitement, and in our minds we had already determined to buy that boat and head down the river for New Orleans.

As we walked along, Charley suggested that we could partition off one end of the boat and put in a nice stock of goods and make some money as we floated down the river. This proposition we unanimously accepted, because Charley’s father was a very successful mer-



## Hicks and the House Boat

chant and influential man, and we thought Charley would be a money-maker, too.

John and I were both orphans. I lived with my uncle and John lived with his two aunts. As I knew I should have to depend on my own efforts in the race of life, I had been saving all the money I could. However, my total in the bank amounted to only one hundred and forty-six dollars. John had a little more than I had, and Charley had plenty, as his father was wealthy.

We got home late that night and crawled into bed, but I remember it seemed to me I never could quit thinking of the beautiful boat, the river, strange scenes, and very, very much money.

The next morning John, Charley, and I were exceedingly busy diplomats, lobbyists, and enterprising business men. We besought the consent of parents and guardians to the purchase of a certain river craft, owned by one Hicks, and to a trading voyage down the Mississippi to New Orleans. We managed to get Charley's father and my uncle and one of John's aunts together. John's aunt was afraid some dreadful accident might happen. For a while our chances looked very slim, but at last Charley's father, who was a man of action, hit the table with his hand and said:



## The Adventures of William Tucker

‘Well, let’s go down and take a look at the boat.’

Curiosity may have been one thing in our favor. They all got up and started out to see the Hicks boat, followed by three very anxious boys. They made a most thorough examination of the boat, and cross-examined Hicks. They were visibly impressed. On leaving the boat, Charley’s father, who was a leading wholesale grocery merchant and cotton factor, took all of us to a restaurant for lunch. I think this also helped our cause, as the meal was an extra good one and everybody was in a good humor at the finish.

Charley’s father then invited the entire party over to his office on Front Row. We all gathered in the big counting-room at the back of the building, the windows of which looked out squarely on the bosom of the broad Mississippi.

‘An idle brain is the devil’s workshop,’ said Mr. Kerr, as we all sat in a circle waiting for the proceedings to begin.

‘I am in favor,’ he continued, ‘of keeping the boys busy this summer at something. If they have on hand no particular legitimate enterprise to occupy their energy, it is possible they might become involved in something not



## Hicks and the House Boat

to be desired. Furthermore, I should like to find out whether these boys have any real business ability. I do not propose to give them one cent. If they have had foresight enough to save some money and can buy the Hicks boat and stock her with a proper lot of merchandise, I say, well and good. Let 'em go out and see what they can do.

'I am not afraid of any of them being drowned, as I know they all swim like ducks. I will be glad to advise them as to the purchase of stock and see that they get the lowest wholesale prices and the best discounts for cash, but beyond that I propose to let them alone and see whether they can paddle their own shantyboat.

'I am not a great believer in hothouse flowers. If any plant grows to maturity in the open, it may have had to contend with more winds and rains and sudden changes in temperature and it may have taken a lot of chances, but it will be a much more hardy plant in its maturity than the hothouse variety, and such outdoor plant will be able to combat successfully a lot of things that would quickly bring the hothouse plant to its death. I say if these boys are able to buy the boat and stock it, let 'em go to it.'



## The Adventures of William Tucker

We thought we had won the day, but John's Aunt Kate gave us a setback when she replied:

'That may all be very true about the hot-house flowers, Mr. Kerr, but down on the lower Mississippi are there not many alligators, or crocodiles, or what-not, that could snap up one of these boys in a second and swallow him whole? Then there's malaria. They may all die of malaria.'

'Well, of course,' replied Mr. Kerr, 'I would not, for one moment, insist on allowing the boys to go on this trip if any relative objects.'

It then looked as if we were about to go down in defeat, and all three of us, with dilated eyes and clenched fists, were on our feet putting in earnest and violent arguments, when we were stopped by the remarks of an English cotton-buyer, who happened to be in the office, and whom Mr. Kerr had just introduced to John's Aunt Kate. English cotton mills send many representatives to Memphis to buy cotton. They are a clean-cut, athletic, well-dressed, successful, manly lot of young fellows, who are not afraid to go to the other side of the world after business.

'Oh, I say, Mr. Kerr,' said the cotton-buyer, 'where would England be to-day if we had all



## Hicks and the House Boat

stopped at home, don't you know, on account of the crocodiles and malaria? My word, madam, one couldn't kill these young adventurers with a midiron. By Jove, it would be a jolly fine trip! I wish I could go myself. I'll lay ten pounds against six bits they all come home alive and well and much wiser than when they started.'

With that the tall Englishman who had spoken and another tall English cotton-buyer marched off in column of twos with long military strides, swinging their canes, as they passed down the aisle between great piles of merchandise. We shall never forget the timely aid these young men, so far from home, gave us on that occasion. They turned the tide in our favor.

There were several weak dissents and murmurings, but John and Charley and I began to talk so fast and with such enthusiasm that in the end it was unanimously agreed that we could buy the boat and make the trip.



## CHAPTER II

### *We Buy a Boat and Prepare for a Long Voyage*

Now that we had the consent of our elders to our enterprise, our enthusiasm was boundless. We were afraid Hicks would go off with the boat before we could buy it. We all rushed to our banks and drew out every dollar we had. We put in one hundred and thirty-three dollars and thirty-three cents each, which made four hundred dollars lacking one cent. We turned all the money over to Charley, as the treasurer, and headed for Wolf River.

I shall never forget how Charley pulled out a big old leather pocketbook about a foot long, which he had found in his attic and which doubtless had belonged to some of his ancestors, and counted out two hundred dollars to Hicks, on the little table in the shantyboat.

Mr. Kerr had drawn up a bill of sale, which Hicks signed. We were now the proud owners of a Mississippi River boat. As we had never really navigated a shantyboat on the Mississippi, we thought it would be best to have Hicks go along with us. We talked, among our-



## We Buy a Boat

selves, about getting him to take a share in the trading venture, but we knew he had to pay off that mortgage in Iowa. We told Hicks that we intended to clear in a few days for New Orleans. We stated that we wanted him to become a member of our party and that we would furnish the food, and all he would have to do would be to keep us out of trouble. Somewhat to our surprise, he readily agreed to this.

We made a careful examination of our new property, and decided the boat should be calked and painted and fitted out in a first-class manner. Then the question of a name came up. We debated this important matter for an hour until John suggested one that met with our approval — The Ocean Queen.

While we were settling all these things, Hicks had disappeared. We did not see him again for two days. When he did come back, his money was nearly all gone and his hand trembled so he could hardly drink out of a cup. I am sorry to say it, but Hicks might have made a much better record in life but for liquor. I am afraid all that talk about a farm in Iowa was just fiction.

In the meantime we had gone home and scraped up all the additional money we could



## The Adventures of William Tucker

get together, which we quickly converted into paint, brushes, ropes, canvas, and all the things we needed. We got a river man who had some big wooden rollers and a block and tackle to help us. He hitched his block and tackle to a tree on the bank, made a track of planks, and pulled The Ocean Queen out of the water. We all helped him. We calked up the seams in the boat with oakum so she would not leak. I can say that getting up under that boat was a hot job.

John and I did most of the work on the outside of the boat, and Charley expended his artistic talent on the inside. John chose the colors the boat was to be painted. He had been reading a novel about Spain, which mentioned the beautiful national colors of that country, so he said we should paint her yellow and red. Yellow and red it was. John slapped on the yellow and I painted the red, as we both sang with gladness. I don't know what Spain had to do with a Mississippi River shantyboat, but things get mixed up that way.

While these preparations for our voyage were going forward, there was one very interested and animated spectator that was in the boat, out of the boat, under the boat, on shore, in the water, in the paint, and between our



## We Buy a Boat

legs. This source of much fun and devilment was my half-grown Airedale dog, named Wag, that we had decided to carry with us to New Orleans. We named him Wag, or Wagtail, because he wagged his tail so much. He was a thoroughbred — curly brown and black. Some people said he was ugly, but he was very faithful to us. I figured it was better for us to have some ugly faithfulness aboard than any two-faced beauty.

Wag had found a wooden ball that had been used as a float on a seine. We lost considerable time from our work throwing this wooden ball up the bank or into the river for Wag to retrieve. Wag thought this was great sport, and when we would not throw the ball for him, he would seize one of our paint brushes in his mouth and swim with it halfway across Wolf River and back, as we stood on the bank and blessed him out for delaying our work while he took a bath. We were always afraid he would drop the paint brushes in the river, but he never failed to bring them back. One day he stole one of Charley's new slippers out of the cabin and swam down the river with the slipper in his mouth. John, with the best intentions, screamed at Wag to come back with the slipper. John's command was given in such a piercing



## The Adventures of William Tucker

tone that it frightened Wag and he dropped the slipper in the water and swam ashore, apparently grinning, as Charley told the world in a loud voice where he had bought those slippers and how much he had paid for them. The slipper sank and was lost.

John had a wild idea about putting a big mast and sail on top of the cabin, but we finally persuaded him that with a sail so far above the water line the first sudden squall would turn us over. He compromised by putting in the mast, just outside the forward door, and abandoning the sail.

We made one of those long 'V'-shaped bags with a hole in the bottom, such as seagoing vessels carry, and fixed it to the top of the mast to tell us which way the wind was blowing. We made this of bright yellow cloth to match the paint. We had another shorter mast at the stern on which John proudly raised a fine United States flag. It was a silk flag that one of his aunts kept for some special purpose.

Hicks went off and brought back a ragged friend from another shantyboat, whom he introduced as an expert sign painter, and such he proved to be. He and Hicks were much amused at our efforts at lettering. The sign



## We Buy a Boat

painter told me what to buy, and I went up-town and got the paints he required. With great care he painted the beautiful name of our beautiful boat in white, blue, and gold letters, a foot and a half high — THE OCEAN QUEEN. It certainly did make us look stylish. We would not have sold our vessel for a thousand dollars in gold. Then on the upper deck over the bow, which was to be the 'business end,' the painter erected and painted a fine business-like sign in black and white, reading as follows:

Y. & M. V. NAVIGATION CO.

DRY GOODS, NOTIONS, HARDWARE

FANCY GROCERIES Etc. Etc.

The 'Y. & M. V.' stood for Yazoo and Mississippi Valley. We thought that name would do as well as any.

The sign painter would not take a cent for his work, but we fed him high on fine ham, beaten biscuit, chicken salad, stuffed eggs, cake and lemon pie and such like, which we were bringing daily from our homes.

These shantyboat people probably had many faults that we were too young to see, but they had their good points as well. They were



## The Adventures of William Tucker

always ready to help one another; none of them ever lacked a meal if any of the others had anything in store. One shantyboat man gave us a little anchor, which we proudly fitted on the forward deck where everybody could see it.

Charley had actually brought fine single mattresses from his home and fastened them on our swinging beds. He also had nice sheets, covers, and pillows. He had decorated the walls with pictures, and he had put up fresh curtains at all the doors and windows. These curtains were of fine material. I think they were old curtains, but of very fine cloth. Yes, and we had rugs on the floor, and a lot of nice dishes in the pantry.

Hanging on the wall over the low glass door at the forward end of the cabin was our artillery. We had two shotguns and a twenty-two caliber rifle and what we called a 'horse' pistol. It was of forty-five caliber and more than a foot long. Swinging from the center of the ceiling was a very large oil lamp, covered by a green shade. Just inside the door at the stern was a barrel with faucet to hold our supply of drinking-water. We had instructions from home not to drink the river water. We kept water and ice in the pretty little cooler and



## We Buy a Boat

filled it out of the barrel. Fastened on the cabin wall amidships was our medicine chest. It contained a miscellaneous collection of drugs and patent medicines — almost anything but ‘chill medicine.’ John’s Aunt Kate was preparing for us a special box of remedies with which to knock out malaria.

We fitted two new oars, or sweeps as they are called, one on each end of the boat. We then let The Ocean Queen down the track and into the water, and she certainly did look fine. She was shining all over, and that name could be seen a quarter of a mile away.

We built a partition to separate the ‘store’ from our living quarters, but put a door in the partition so we could pass back and forth. Then we had a job putting up the shelves. As soon as we got that finished, all three of us spent half a day with Mr. Kerr buying our stock.

We had only two hundred dollars with which to buy our first stock, so we could not indulge in a very large quantity of any one item, but with Mr. Kerr’s expert advice we managed to get a good deal for the money. As nearly as I can remember this is about what we purchased; calico, domestic, overalls, needles and thread, hosiery, shirts, bandanna hand-



## The Adventures of William Tucker

kerchiefs, French harps — otherwise known as harmonicas, Jew's-harps, looking-glasses, cologne, face powder, musk, knives, razors, dollar watches, cheese, bologna sausage, crackers, soda water, ginger snaps, lemon and peppermint stick candy, soap, matches, pencils, writing-paper, envelopes and ink, salmon, sardines, cove oysters, coffee, tea, tinware, a box of lemons, and one large bunch of bananas.

‘Now, boys,’ said Mr. Kerr as we finished our last transaction, ‘this is not just an idle prank that you have undertaken. It is an important experiment. It is a real practical test to determine whether you will be successful citizens, commanding the respect of all who know you, or whether you will be — well — just bumps on a log, or, in plain English — nothing. We will now see whether you can get out in the world and take care of yourselves and make some money, or whether you will come back busted with nothing but a bunch of excuses. When you get back, I can tell whether to look forward to the assistance of three future partners in business, or to look forward to the help of three clerks.

‘Now that you boys are about to embark on your first real business venture, let me ask you this question:



## We Buy a Boat

‘What do you think of a man who cheats at cards — a fellow who poses as a gentleman, gets in a game, and then slips aces out of his sleeves, under the table?

‘You think he is a low-down, contemptible cheat, not worthy of the notice of any decent citizen. Well, boys, life itself from the cradle to the grave is just a game. Whenever a man violates any of our laws, either civil or criminal, state or federal, he is simply cheating in the game of life, the same as the cheater at cards, who deals from the bottom of the deck. By the unanimous decision of all respectable citizens of the world it has long been decided that the game of life must be played fairly and aboveboard, or the offender must suffer terrible punishment.

‘If at any time you attempt to take the law into your own hands and deal out punishment to those you suspect of crime, again you are cheating — cheating the law. Your hands are under the table, pulling cards from beneath your vest. Sooner or later you will have to reckon with the mighty arm of the law, and pay the awful penalty for cheating.

‘If you violate any of the civil laws and hinder any man in the peaceful enjoyment of his property, either personal or real, you are



## The Adventures of William Tucker

not playing the game fairly and will have to pay the penalty, with heavy costs.

‘My boys, you do not come of a race of men who have handled their cards under the table. Your ancestors have played the game of life fairly, and have won.

‘So, young gentlemen, as you are loosed from the apron strings of the ladies at home, and step forward with many eyes upon you, to engage in the greatest and most wonderful of all games — the game of life — remember the time-tested maxim:

“Cheating never thrives.”

‘Insist on seeing that the game is played fairly in every detail. You should be as careful to do justice to the smallest pickaninny, who lays down a slick dime on your counter, as you would be certain to give full measure to your most valued customer. If your customer walks away and leaves his change, call him back. If some one gives you too much money in changing a bill, give it back at once. Never establish a precedent, no matter how small the transaction, which will force your inmost consciousness to admit that you have cheated. If you ever amount to anything, you must have some self-respect.

‘Go to it, and keep both eyes open — and



## We Buy a Boat

remember, you are not in any hothouse. You are now out in the open world, where almost anything is liable to happen.'



## CHAPTER III

*Five Thousand Dollars Reward for Hamon — We Get a Fine Lot of Tents — An Attack by Hamon*

THE next morning after we had bought our stock of goods, my uncle sent me out about daylight to look for some cows which had strayed away. We lived on a small farm in the eastern suburbs of Memphis, not far from the Loosahatchie River bottoms. As I was walking along the bank of Hatchie River looking for the cows, I heard loud and angry voices. I looked ahead and saw in the river a yellow shantyboat tied to a tree. The altercation that had attracted my attention was evidently taking place inside the boat. I slipped up closer and got behind a big sycamore tree to see what was going to happen. One man seemed to be in a violent rage, and the other was trying to argue. The quarrel became still more heated, and now and then the shrill voice of a woman could be heard. The enraged man yelled:

‘When you went into this thing you agreed to take one sixth of the money, and now you want half — you’re a liar if you say you didn’t! And what did you do? Nothin’ but stan’ out in



## An Attack by Hamon

the bushes and hold the horses, while I had to fight three men and blow up a car. I ain't a-goin' to stan' fer hit — I'm a-goin' to kill you like a dog, right now!'

The door at the far end of the boat flew open, and out rushed a man pursued by another man who was much taller than the first one. I could see the flash of a big knife in the tall man's hand. In a few jumps he caught the smaller man and slashed him across the arm with the knife. He might have inflicted further and more serious injury upon the object of his wrath, but the tall man's foot caught in a seine that was spread out on the ground, and he fell on his hands and knees. Before he could regain his feet, the other man had made good his escape in the dense undergrowth of the vast hardwood forest which surrounded us on all sides.

The woman had run out of the boat behind the men, and as she and the tall man wildly shouted at each other, I poked my head round the other side of the sycamore and looked in the stern door of the boat. There on the table, with the morning sunlight shining right upon it through an open window, was the biggest pile of paper money I had ever seen in my life. It was all done up in bundles, and looked like a fortune.



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For a time I did not dare to move, but waited until I thought it was safe to make a dash for home. I began to slip away as quietly as I could, but that awful man caught sight of me, and here he came!

‘Stop thar, you little thief,’ he called. ‘What you doin’ sneakin’ round my boat? I’m a-goin’ to slit your throat from year to year!’

I ran madly. I fell over a log and was tripped by vines, but I did not slacken my efforts in the least for a long time. Even after I reached the public road, I continued a steady trot all the way home.

I had heard of a big robbery which had taken place about a week before, across the river in Arkansas. Some desperadoes had looted a train and robbed the express company of a very large sum in currency. From what I had now heard and seen, I was satisfied these were two of the men who had committed the crime.

As soon as I reached home I reported my experience to my uncle. He said we should notify the police and we started out at once for the police station. The Chief of Police had me tell my story, and immediately sent a squad of police and detectives out in Hatchie bottom to the point I described. We learned later that



## An Attack by Hamon

when they arrived, the yellow shantyboat and the robbers were nowhere to be found.

One of the detectives took me and my uncle up to the Express Building on Court Square to see the superintendent of the express company. The superintendent was a large, smooth-faced man with a big voice. He questioned me closely, then he bawled out in a very loud voice:

‘Look here, Wilkerson — and listen to what this young man says.’

Wilkerson came in with a pencil and pad of paper. He was evidently the stenographer and private secretary. They shut all the doors and made me tell every detail of what I had seen and heard and Wilkerson took it all down in shorthand.

As soon as I had told all I knew, the superintendent began to pace the floor and talk in a loud, full voice:

‘We are very much obliged to you, young man,’ he said, ‘for your prompt action in this matter. The tall man you saw cut the other with a knife is Hamon, one of the boldest criminals in the country. I want to say to you right now, young man, that this company has offered a reward of five thousand dollars for Zeke Hamon, dead or alive, and if the informa-



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tion you have given leads to his capture, dead or alive, you will get your share of the money. If you see anything more of this band of criminals, communicate with me at once and you may win the reward yet.'

After leaving the express company's office I lost no time in getting down to The Ocean Queen and relating my adventure to Charley, John, and Hicks. Our friend, the former owner of The Ocean Queen, was extremely interested in my account. When I described the yellow boat and the woman, and the tall man with the knife, Hicks exclaimed:

'Yes, sir: that was Hamon an' Ginnie — his wife. You never should have been monkeyin' around there. That's one of the most vicious men on the river from Itasca to the Gulf. You know what he done about nine year ago? He had robbed a bank up here in Missouri an' he beat it down to his shantyboat. I was on to him an' I was goin' to turn him in to the police an' git a reward, but he suspicioned me an' tried to kill me one night up at Caruthersville, with a knife. That's his long suit. An' he would er done it, too, if it hadn't been for the cap'n of a towboat, which seeing my crippled condition came to my assistance.

'You see, they ain't no inspectors on the



## An Attack by Hamon

river, no union depots an' iron gates an' no police, nor nuthin'. Whenever he pulls off a big robbery him an' Ginnie gits in a shanty-boat an' just quietly floats down of a night an' hides away, an' every day they is in a different place. An' Hamon has made so many trips on this Mississippi River, that he knows all the moonshiners an' counterfeiterers an' other crooks, frum Saint Louis to New Orleans. He stops an' makes 'em all a little visit goin' an' comin', an' they put him on to eve'thing what's goin' on in their neighborhood. That's one thing makes him so hard to ketch. He's always runnin' with some er these here local criminals, an' they hep him out at eve'y turn. That's why the express company is willin' to give five thousand dollars for him, dead or alive. If Hamon comes round here, I'll tell you right now, I'm goin' to pull my freight fer Hen an' Chickens.'

Hicks referred to Hen and Chickens Islands several miles up the Mississippi. This group of islands consists of one large island and a number of small islands, which are supposed to resemble a hen with her chickens.

We now had our stock of goods on board and were very busy arranging it and marking prices on each and every item. One thing we



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needed was some tents, as we expected to do some hunting and camping on our way south. For some time we could not solve the problem of the tents, as we had spent so much money.

One day I was talking to my uncle's cousin, who was a physician and a mighty fine man, and I told him how very much we needed tents. He said he had some tents that he had been ordered to burn because they were supposed to have been occupied by patients with contagious diseases, but that some of the tents had not been used at all, and he supposed we might as well have them as for him to take them out and burn them. He told me to come to the hospital the next day at a certain hour. We were there an hour ahead of time, and we had three or four little negro boys hired for the occasion.

The doctor took us into a big warehouse and pointed out two large boxes.

'Here are some tents,' he said, 'that have never been opened. You can have them if you take them out to-day. I am going to burn all the other tents you see here.'

We packed tents nearly all that day. There were eight tents and it was a very long, hot road for a boy with one end of a heavy tent and pole on his shoulder. But with us it was what



## An Attack by Hamon

the poets would call a labor of love. Our eyes glistened with excitement. We panted and tugged and pulled and trotted along with the sweat rolling off us in streams, but we were supremely happy. We were certainly well fitted out. There were 'A' tents and round tents, and big tents and little tents. Some had flies to go over them and some did not.

The next day while we were working on the boat, John came running down the bank in great excitement — his face as red as a beet:

'When I was coming through the lumber yard up there just now,' he panted, 'one of the meanest-looking men I ever saw walked up to me and accused me of hiding behind a tree and eavesdropping round his boat on Hatchie River. He pulled out a long knife, and said he was going to cut my ears off, so I would not be able to listen to things that did not concern me. I ran all the way down here, and he may be coming after me any minute. He's an awfully tall man, and about every third word he says to you, he snaps his jaws and rolls his eyes. He just keeps on snapping his jaws. Say, he must be crazy. Do you suppose it's that train robber?'

Hicks, listening to this account of John's adventure, grew suddenly pale. He knew Ha-



## The Adventures of William Tucker

mon was close at hand and he lost no time in scrambling into his skiff and pulling out for Hen and Chickens. John loaded one of our shotguns and went inside a neighboring shanty-boat, while Charley and I watched outside our boat.

Of course, Hamon had mistaken John for me. We were of the same age and size and Hamon did not get a good look at me as I ran away from his boat through the undergrowth.

In a moment I saw Hamon coming boldly down the bank. He had evidently been watching us from behind a pile of lumber ever since John's arrival.

Hamon took a good, long, steady look at Hicks, as he pulled the skiff out into Wolf River. He raised his arm and, pointing at Hicks, called out:

'You done me dirt once, an' I let you git by 'cause you was a cripple, but this time I'm a-goin' to git you an' don't you never fergit hit—sendin' these kids roun' my boat to spy on me when I ain't done a thing to you. I'm a-goin' to git you, Hicks! They ain't no man can inform on me an' take erway my liberty an' live! An' now I'm a-goin' over thar an' git that little rat outen that other boat an' cut his years off.'



## An Attack by Hamon

Hamon started for where John was hiding, but I dashed ahead of him and into the boat. John was not in hiding, as I thought, but was in the middle of the cabin with the loaded shotgun in his hands.

‘John,’ I yelled, ‘drop that gun and jump into the river. It’s your only chance.’

John handed me the gun and dived off the stern, without even removing his new straw hat. Hamon came in the cabin door, walked past me, and out on the stern and stood there and watched John swim a hundred yards to the island across the stream. While this was going on, I got out on the bank and was joined by Charley.

Hamon came out on the bow of the boat and surveyed us with disdain, as Wag jumped back and forth and barked at him furiously.

‘You’re a bunch of meddlers, that’s what you is,’ he said. ‘You’re a-goin’ to find out that stickin’ your noses in other people’s business is a-goin’ to git you in trouble. You mark my word; I’m a-goin’ to git the whole mess of ye!’

Hamon walked down the plank and up into the thick willows and disappeared.

After a considerable while we got Hicks to come back with the skiff and ferry John across. Hicks was very much frightened.



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As I was really afraid Hamon might do John some harm if he met him again, I told him it would be best for him to remain at home until we sailed, and that he could meet us below the big bridge on the Tennessee side and come aboard. After that we sent a lot of notes to John, written in our secret code, which we had made up several years before.



## CHAPTER IV

*We Sail for New Orleans — Tom Green as a Detective*

WE were now all ready to sail. We wrote another code note to John, sending it to him by a little negro boy, who was well paid. We told him in the note that we would start at 5 P.M. on Monday, from our wharf at the mouth of Wolf River. We instructed him to meet us 'below the bridge' and we would make a landing and take him aboard, and be off for New Orleans. We got a code answer from John by the same little negro, saying he would await us 'below the bridge' as requested.

That last day — a little while before we sailed — a boy named Edgar Zwank came down to the river to look us over. He really wanted to go on *The Ocean Queen*, but we had not invited him, as none of us had much confidence in him.

'So you are going to try to make it to New Orleans in that little scow, are you?' remarked Edgar in a contemptuous tone, as he stood on the bank in his fine clothes. 'None of that for me,' he continued. 'I'm going down to New



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Orleans on the train in a few days. You will be telegraphing home for money before you get to Helena.' Calling me aside, he said:

'William, you are a poor boy, and you ought not to be throwing away your time in this manner. If you don't get drowned, come around to see me in New Orleans, and I may be able to give you a good job as porter, or something like that. You can easily find my name in the telephone book, as I shall be well established in business by the time you get there.'

I felt like knocking him into the river right there, but I hated to have any trouble just as we were leaving port, so I let it go without comment, but I was certain the fellow was trying to insult me.

That Monday was one of the busiest, most exciting, hottest, and happiest days of my life. It seemed we had a hundred things to do. We had to go back after more lemons to make lemonade, and we had a terrible time getting two hundred pounds of ice.

Our purchase of the houseboat had not included the skiff, so Hicks sold it to a shantyboat man and embarked with some money in his pocket.

At the last minute I had to run a half-mile



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to get several things that had been forgotten. Hicks was on board, hidden in the closet, for fear of an attack by Hamon.

At last and about on time we got away. I untied the line from the willow tree and threw the end of the rope into the river as I made a mighty leap for the deck. I landed with one foot, but the other splashed through the water. What did a river man care for that? I rolled up my trousers halfway to my knees, and also rolled up the sleeves of my blue flannel shirt, and stood by the after sweep to guide the boat. I don't know why I wore a blue flannel shirt on that very hot day, but truth is stranger than fiction — that is what I wore. I had some vague idea about wool absorbing the perspiration and preventing me from catching cold. Besides this, I had seen river men wearing flannel shirts.

Seated on top of the cabin in a comfortable canvas chair under the floating yellow cornucopia was Charles. He wore his older brother's silk shirt, a pair of his daddy's silk socks, and his sister's tennis shoes. He had on his own newly laundered and spotlessly white duck trousers and a white canvas hat pulled down over his eyes. In his left hand he carelessly held his mother's opera glasses. Charley's



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breast was swelled out; I certainly was proud of him. He was playing the part of 'owner' or something of the kind. From his clothes, his posture, and expression you would have supposed he owned all the steamboats between Saint Paul and New Orleans.

With the wonderful silk flag gracefully fluttering over our stern, we slowly floated out into the current, before a grinning crowd of shantyboat people who yelled good luck after us in their own peculiar way.

I had to begin work at once on the big oar so as to get the boat into the stream and keep her there. It was not far to the Mississippi, and we were soon out in the swift current of the mighty river, which at this point made against the Tennessee shore with tremendous force. The water was more than a hundred feet deep. The whirlpools were often very powerful, and many an unlucky swimmer has been sucked under and never seen again. The river at Memphis was always at least a mile wide, and during an overflow it would be about forty miles wide, extending all the way back through Arkansas to Crawley's Ridge. Memphis itself is built on bluffs that are high above the river. This high shore on the Tennessee side extends some four or five miles down the river



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and then it suddenly descends to almost a level with the river.

When we were once fairly out in the current, Hicks came on deck for air, and we left him to do what steering and paddling was necessary.

It was a wonderfully free feeling to be out there on the big river at last and to see old Memphis slipping by. There was a long row of steamboats, the busy levee, the weather-beaten buildings on Front Row and the beautiful Custom House with its two towers. There was a great babble of talk, laughter, and shouts, ringing of steamboat bells and blowing of whistles. Ahead of us stretched the great bridge — the last bridge across the Mississippi as one descends the river. I wondered why people would live in a hot, stuffy city, when there was such a big, clean river to ride upon.

We heard the hoarse whistle of a steamboat, and saw a big side-wheeler backing out to make her departure. She began to turn in a circle and was headed directly for us.

‘Get on that sweep there, you boys,’ yelled Hicks. We obeyed with the utmost promptness and managed to stay clear of the steamboat, but it seemed to us we did not have much room to spare. As the big steamer passed, the



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waves struck us and rocked The Ocean Queen until I thought everything in the boat would be broken. Dishes, pans, skillets, cans, cups, and such like fell down and began to roll all about the boat and Wag ran up and down the cabin barking violently.

Our efforts to avoid the steamboat had sent us farther and farther out on the river until we were now about the middle of the stream. We had to work on the sweeps to go still farther toward the Arkansas shore to get round one of the big piers of the bridge.

We then began to think of John. He was to meet us below the bridge on the Tennessee side. As soon as we passed under the bridge we all began working on the sweeps for dear life, trying to bring our boat to the Tennessee side. These sweeps are simply big, clumsy oars, which work on a pivot. Charley and I worked one and Hicks the other, but we were swept on down toward President's Island, and it began to look as if John would sojourn yet a little longer in Memphis.

It was killing work pulling on the big rough handles, but old Hicks was strong and gradually we approached the Tennessee shore. We could see some one running along the water's edge at the foot of the high, steep, yellow clay



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bluffs. We had a long pull and John had a long run, for the runner turned out to be John.

We finally made a landing and John came scrambling along the bank. He was a sight to behold. In one hand he had a suit-case, and in the other a guitar. His coat was thrown across the arm that carried the guitar. From his left shoulder dangled a squalling parrot. She was tied to a cord which was fastened around John's neck. On his right shoulder sat his little pet monkey, Romeo. He was having a 'monkey and parrot time.'

John, wild-eyed and covered with mud, was pulled aboard, but he was scarcely able to speak for lack of breath. Wag barked at John and his private menagerie at first, but he and Romeo soon made friends and were boon companions ever afterwards. We scraped the worst of the mud off John and as we got into the current again we were all supremely happy, though exhausted from our efforts.

'John, where is that box of chill medicine your Aunt Kate was fixing up?' asked Charley.

John snapped his finger and frowned, as he answered: 'Don't you know, I started with that box under my arm and was out in the street. Uncle Charley called me back, and



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I put it on the hatrack and it's there yet, I reckon. We are not going to have any chills.'

We decided to make an early landing this first day, and a few miles farther along we worked the boat to the Tennessee shore and landed near a public road. We put out several lines which held the Queen's bow on to the bank and displayed our business sign. This arrangement also prevented any one from entering the boat except by way of the store door.

Every person who came along the road was attracted by our shipshape, freshly painted shantyboat. Every one came down the bank to see the boat, and John and Charley did not let many of them get away without selling them something.

Hicks and I were busy putting up one of our new tents on a nice level spot on the bank. We had those tents and we wanted to try them out. A big powerful negro who was standing round volunteered to help. He said his name was Tom Green, and that he had just walked down from Memphis. We got to talking about shantyboats and Tom said he saw a yellow shantyboat up in Nonconnah Creek that morning, about four miles north. We questioned him more closely and became convinced it was Hamon's boat. Hamon must have moved



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down from Hatchie River, north of Memphis, to Nonconnah Creek, south of Memphis.

We told Tom we would pay him well if he would go to Hamon's boat and conceal himself so he could listen for an hour and come back and report to us what Hamon and Ginnie had said. Tom rolled his big white eyes and seemed to hesitate. Charley pulled a new two-dollar bill out of his vest pocket and handed it to Tom.

'There's a two-dollar bill for you,' said Charley, 'and when you come back with the report, here is a five-spot for you, and here's two bits more you can have now to get something to eat at The Ocean Queen store before you start.'

These inducements would have been too much for any ordinary negro, and Tom accepted at once. After buying bologna sausage, sardines, and crackers he started back for Nonconnah Creek. We heard no more of him until about ten o'clock that night, when, as we sat around the camp-fire in front of the tent, Tom walked up. One trousers leg was torn off at the knee, his shirt was in tatters, and one arm was bandaged with rags.

'For Heaven's sake, Tom, what has happened to you?' I exclaimed.



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‘Well, Mr. William, hit’s more’n enough happened to me, since I bin gone from here,’ replied Tom, as he took his seat on a proffered box by the fire. ‘You see, when I got down thar to Nonconnah, hit was jist dusk dark, an’ dey wa’n’t nobody roun’ dat shantyboat. I lay quiet like in de weeds till hit got pitch black dark, an’ still dey wa’n’t nobody come roun’ thar. Den I make up my mind my time done come to hide myself jist lak you say. I rises up outen de weeds an’ creeps down to de boat, an’ listens very quiet fur a while, an’ I don’t hear nothin’, so I jist make bold an’ clim’ right up on top of de boat. Hit was so dark you couldn’t see yo’ han’ ’fo’ yo’ face.

‘Well, arter while I hear ’em comin’, an’ my heart beat mighty fast, I kin tell you. Dey come on in de boat an’ fetched a lot of groceries what dey brought from town. Dey cooked dey supper, an’ set thar an’ eat, ’outen much talk. But arter while ole Hamon set down in a cher an’ bump back ’ginst de wall an’ say:

“Ginnie, what I’m a-thinkin’ is this; arter I cuts Hicks’s throat, which I’m a-gwine to do, I think we’ll be plumb safe right here in dis boat arter I paint hit green, which I’m a-gwine to do to-morrow. We kin jist float on down



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an' put ole peg-leg an' that boy what eaves-drops outen de way, an' then hit won't be nuthin' to bother us twixt here an' New Orleans."

'Hamon say he knowed you-all done come on down de river, an' how come him to know, he done hid in dat lumber yard on Wolf River an' watch you when you lef'.

'I commence to think how wuz I gwine to git down from top of dat boat 'cause I didn't feel like stayin' up thar much longer, an' I wuz jist natcherly feared to move — an' yit I kep' on feelin' sompin' callin' me at home. But how wuz I — how wuz I gwine to git thar?

'I lay thar an' think an' think, an' I jist knew ef I made a move, they wuz gwine to hear me, so at last I gits jist in a fit of desperation an' I decide to jump off an' run.

'I makes de jump, but dis here pants leg mus' er caught on a hook, or sompin' in de dark, an' dar I wuz pawin' round dar on de roof, makin' a fuss like seben fire ingine hosses on a plank flo', an' I jist natcherly couldn't git loose to save my life. Ole Hamon he runs out de do' an' hollers out:

"What de jumpin' jehosaphat is dat ar up dar on dat ar roof?"

'Ginnie, she yells out, "Hit's a catamount —



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dat's whut hit is — en hit's a-gwine to jump down on ye. Git outen de way."

'But ole Hamon he grabs up a pole, an' he whale down on de middle of my back, an' I thought he sho' done bust me in two, but still I couldn't git myself loose offen dat hook, an' Ginnie she runs out an' th'ows a kittle of hot water up thar on me, an' dat's when I tore half my pants off an' hits de groun'. White folks, I sho' done some runnin', but hit wuz so dark I run up 'ginst a barb-wire fence, an' tore myself all to pieces, an' here I is — that is, what's left of me.'

Charley gave Tom his five dollars, and three dollars extra to buy a new pair of pants. Tom slept by the fire all night.

Camping out in the new tent was fine, except for the mosquitoes. We either had to be blinded by smoke or bitten by mosquitoes all the time. The result was that the next morning we were peppered with bites from head to foot.

We packed up and got back on our nice, big shantyboat as quickly as possible and cast off and floated on down the river.

After dinner we found comfortable places and took much-needed naps. As the afternoon advanced, it grew hotter. Hicks was busy in the cabin washing dishes, but John, Charley,



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and I got over on the shady side of the boat, pulled off our shoes and socks, rolled up our trousers and sat down on the runway, letting our feet drag through the water. We leaned back against the cabin wall in perfect peace and happiness. John started a song, and we all joined in with a will. The words ran something like this:

‘Oh! see the boat go round the bend —  
Good-bye, my lover, good-bye —  
She’s loaded down with Memphis men —  
Good-bye, my lover, good-bye.  
Bye, oh, my ba—by,  
Good-bye, my lover, good-b—ye.’

The weather became hotter and more oppressive. The sun seemed almost unbearably hot. The wind died away and far off to the southwest we could see great banks of dark clouds, tipped with white, like mountains of whipped cream on top of some dark blue liquid in a giant’s bowl. Perspiration stood out on all of us in big drops, and everything began to get quiet. The dark clouds slowly but constantly swelled forward and upward. Then we could see distant flashes of lightning and hear far-off rolls of thunder. Our flag hung limp. Hicks advised us we had better take it down, man the sweeps, and pull for the shore.



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A little ripple came across the smooth water, and we could see the trees on the Arkansas side begin to wave and bend. A few scattering big drops of rain pattered down. Then the atmosphere was split in twain by a terrible bolt of lightning and an awful crash of thunder. The wind hit us and careened the boat. We could see the white rain coming in a long straight line. We were working those sweeps to the very best of our ability, but the storm won the race. It struck us so hard that for a moment The Ocean Queen stopped as if she had run aground. The rain was driven across the river in almost horizontal floods at times, and it felt like ice-water. After the very hot day, this cold water chilled us to the bone. Our teeth chattered and our fingers and lips turned blue. Hicks yelled commands, Wag crouched inside the cabin door and growled, Polly parrot screamed, Romeo hid in a pasteboard shoe-box, and we all struggled with the sweeps, and presently The Ocean Queen went flying into the bank.



## CHAPTER V

### *On the Sand-Bars — Molasses and Tacks — Mr. Jinkins Runs a Race*

WHEN The Ocean Queen struck the bank, we jumped out with the lines and soon had her safe, held by two strong ropes. Then we tumbled into the cabin, shut all the windows and doors, and built a fire in the stove. We stripped off and rubbed each other with towels and sheets and anything we could get, and put on some dry clothes. Soon we were feeling all right again, for our goods were all safe and dry and The Ocean Queen had proved that she was as tight as a barrel.

The next day after the storm, when we had everything straight and were heading down the middle of the river again, John remarked that we ought to have watches, like sailors. This sounded reasonable, and no one made any objection. Good-natured old Hicks was ready to try anything once. So it was agreed that we should travel at night, when there was enough moonlight, and make stops in the daytime at places where mosquitoes would not be likely to bother us.

I think one thing that influenced us to de-



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cide to travel at night was that we wanted to use the nice new green, red, and white lanterns we had bought in Memphis. We decided that it was necessary to have a watch on deck from eight at night to five o'clock in the morning, a period of nine hours. We agreed to stand a watch of two hours each, which made eight hours, and the last watch in the morning we called the 'gravy eye' and made that one three hours. We were to take turnabout standing this long morning watch. That night John stood the first watch.

As we sat in the cabin, Charley and I noticed that Hicks kept poking into all kinds of places, as if looking for something. We knew for what he was looking. After he had sold the skiff the day we left Memphis, he had come down to the boat with a bottle of whiskey under his coat to keep us from knowing what it was. However, we had watched him and had seen where he put it. We knew he should not be going out on the river with that whiskey, so we took the bottle and hid it way up in the bow in a dark hole. We should, perhaps, have thrown it into Wolf River, but we were only boys, while he was a grown man.

Hicks was ashamed to say anything. He just kept on looking for the whiskey bottle.



## Mr. Jenkins Runs a Race

The night travel proved a success. It was comparatively cool at night on the river, and as there were no mosquitoes we slept well. Standing watch alone while the others slept was an experience I never forgot. Everything by which we were surrounded was serious and big; the dark river-banks clothed in wild forests, showing no lights, except at long intervals the government lights intended for the guidance of pilots; the great heavens above, dimly lit by the stars and the moon, which were often obscured by flying clouds; the great river itself, silent, but always whispering of a terrible and irresistible power.

All went well. The next day we were very much in favor of night travel as compared with nights on the bank. Just before dinner we sighted a big sand-bar in the middle of the river. It was about a mile long with only an occasional small clump of willows and cottonwood trees. We found a place where the water was deep enough for us to make a landing, and John jumped out in fine sailor fashion, carrying the anchor on his shoulder. We stuck the anchor in the sand and also made a line fast to an old log, half buried near the water's edge.

Then we were free. There was no one to tell



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us not to do this and that. There was a feeling of being cut off from everything on this island of sand out in the big river. There was nothing but the river and the sand, and you, and God. There were no rickety houses, smoking chimneys, heaps of rusty tin cans, nor other signs of man to cast a blemish on the perfect work of nature. We did not say all this to each other at the time, but we felt it just the same.

The first thing we did was to take off our clothes and go in swimming. The sand was soft and smooth, and on one side of the island we could walk out in the water a hundred yards before it came up to our shoulders. We swam and splashed in the water and floated and ducked each other to our hearts' content. Then we sat at the edge of the water, and plastered each other with wet sand and mud in all kinds of fancy designs, and ran about, taking great delight in making footprints where no footprints had ever been before.

Old Hicks — he seemed old to us — had remained on the boat and cooked a fine dinner. I remember that day he stuck his red, smiling face out of a window and yelled:

‘Come on to jambolaya.’

Jambolaya is a regular article of diet on the lower Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. It is



## Mr. Jenkins Runs a Race

made of rice, bacon, and tomatoes, with a lot of seasoning. It is all cooked together in a skillet. Shrimp jambolaya is a favorite dish.

Late that afternoon, when the sun had set, and the river and the land had been enveloped in that quiet, gray atmosphere which precedes night, we allowed the current to carry us on across the river toward a high, steep bank, as the swallows, which we called 'bull-bats,' circled and swooped and fluttered about and caught some of the gnats which swarmed in the hot, still air above the Arkansas shore.

We hit the bank beneath a large tree and John passed a line round a limb to hold us in place for the night. We did not know it then, but we found out later that we had tied up immediately beneath a government light on the bank above, which light, of course, marked the channel of the river in its crossing from the Mississippi side to the Arkansas side.

We were too tired to do any night traveling, so we cooked supper, and made a smoke to keep the mosquitoes away and went to bed.

Sometime during the night we were awakened by the whistle of a steamboat close at hand. She threw her headlight directly on our motionless and innocent little shantyboat. We



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could hear her coming. We could hear the powerful exhausts and the fast beat of the paddles as they pounded the water. She came closer and closer until she was right on top of us! We all thought the next moment would see The Ocean Queen crushed like an eggshell! We all ran about, but none of us knew where we were going, or what we were trying to do. The great steamboat passed very close to us. She did not touch us, but we got the full force of her waves, which made a real typhoon for the little Queen. As the steamboat turned, we were thrown into utter darkness and the waves nearly shook us to pieces. Everybody in the boat fell over something in the inky darkness; Polly screamed at the top of her voice; Wag barked and Romeo chattered to add to the confusion. Hicks was hopping about on his one bare foot, without his wooden leg. Everything movable in the boat fell down, and in the vicinity of Hicks it seems that a large tin can, filled with sugar-house molasses and covered only by a tin pie pan, fell off a shelf and made a lake on the floor. Also at the same time descended from the shelf a glass goblet nearly full of carpet tacks. The tacks made a thousand islands in the sugar-house lake, and through the darkness into this lake hopped Hicks on



## Mr. Jinkins Runs a Race

his one bare foot. The remarks by Mr. Hicks will not bear repeating.

John made his way on his hands and knees to the forward deck and climbed the rope like a monkey up to the limb of the tree and was heading for the shore. We rode out the storm and on the morrow we cleaned up the mess, but that was the last time we ever tied up The Ocean Queen beneath a government light, directly in the path of the big steamers.

I think it was two days after this that we landed at a town on the Mississippi side late one afternoon and were having a good sale. When we first landed, Hicks took a gun and went down the bank in the woods to see if he could kill a squirrel for supper. In a little while he came stumping back as fast as his peg leg would let him. He was terribly excited and called me behind the store building at once.

‘Hamon’s boat is right yonder under the bank,’ he whispered in my ear — ‘not more than a quarter of a mile from here. He has painted it green all right, but I would know it anywhere.’

We went on board the Queen and held a consultation with John and Charley. After considerable discussion, we all agreed it would not



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do to attempt to capture Hamon at night — that he would either get away or kill some of us. We thought it would be best to find a sheriff and get him to help us try to arrest Hamon the next day. After supper we went up and asked one of the store-keepers to tell us where we could find an officer. He said there was a justice of the peace up the road about a mile, and that a deputy sheriff was usually to be found in his office.

We borrowed a lantern from the merchant and John and Charley and I trudged up the road and found the justice and his deputy. They were very much interested in our story and particularly that part which related to the 'five thousand dollars reward dead or alive.' The deputy agreed to meet us at the Queen the next morning early and we would make the attempt to put a pair of bracelets on Mr. Zeke Hamon. We tried our best to get this deputy to summon other officers, but he claimed he did not need any assistance.

This deputy sheriff was built more like a giraffe than any man I ever saw. His legs were outrageously long and slender. So was his body, but he had a tremendous big black mustache and he wore a business-like and fierce expression. He took very quick and energetic



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steps and looked straight to the front, as if there was no question at all about his ability to serve any legal papers or arrest any criminal forthwith. He wore a big nickel-plated star and carried a 'horse' pistol, which looked to be large enough to kill an elephant. His name was Mr. Jinkins.

The next morning soon after daylight Mr. Jinkins arrived with his pistol, and we were all set to bring Hamon to justice. I don't think the sheriff had tried to secure the assistance of any other officers, as he wanted to get a big slice of the reward. In fact, I think he had settled in his own mind just how he would spend the money.

John was anxious to tackle Hamon again, but we persuaded him to stay behind and run the store. We knew Hamon had promised to 'get' John and we thought it the part of prudence to let John devote himself to the accumulation of money on that particular day.

Charley and I and Hicks and Mr. Jinkins started down the bank in single file. Jinkins led the way and Hicks brought up the rear. We stooped low and crept along very cautiously through the tall weeds. None of us had any firearms except Mr. Jinkins. He said he would do all the shooting necessary; that it



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was better for us to be unarmed, as we might get excited and shoot his head off.

When we came opposite the place where Hicks had seen Hamon's boat the evening before, we peeped out, and there was the boat, shining in a fine new coat of green paint. There was Ginnie reclining on a pallet beside a smoldering fire on the bank under a big cottonwood tree about a hundred feet away from the shantyboat. Hamon was nowhere to be seen.

We waited and waited for Hamon to put in his appearance. We waited maybe three hours, and the sun was getting very hot, but there was not the slightest sign of Hamon anywhere.

Finally Mr. Jenkins announced that he was convinced Hamon was inside the boat, and he was going down and get him. We all hoped he would 'get him,' but Charley and I and Hicks had grave doubts on the subject.

Mr. Jenkins told us to follow a short distance behind him. He arose boldly out of the weeds with his big pistol in his hand, and marched for the boat with the quickest kind of step, as if he had only a few minutes to devote to this job and had many other matters of importance awaiting his attention.

He entered the boat and nothing happened. Ginnie could not see us, as we had purposely



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approached from an angle where her view was obscured. Then we all very quickly got on Hamon's boat and began a search to see what we could find that might incriminate him. But this is where the trouble began. Hicks got his peg leg stuck in a crack and fell against some shelves, and down came an armful of tin pans and cups and dishes and the like.

Charley and I were off at the first crash, running for our lives. Jinkins, who was near the stern door when the pans and dishes fell down, at once jumped out on deck and started for the shore on the runway outside the boat. He was holding on by a handrail on the top of the cabin. The handrail broke and Mr. Jinkins fell backward into about ten feet of water.

Ginnie had jumped up at the first alarm, and she carried a double-barreled shotgun in her hands. As she ran for the boat, gun in hand, Hicks presented a fair target as he hopped along in the opposite direction. She raised the gun and fired at Hicks. This shot missed its aim, but she immediately fired the other barrel and this time old Hicks jumped clean off the ground and let out a terrible yell. Hicks fell down and Ginnie ran up to him and they grappled. Hicks wrenched the gun from her hands and threw it into the river, and then



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gave her a shove that caused her to slide down the steep bank to the water's edge.

In the meantime Mr. Jenkins had swum ashore. As Charley and I stood in the weeds on the bank, we saw Mr. Jenkins wading out on his long legs — but his pistol was gone!

At that moment Hamon, who must have heard the two shots fired from Ginnie's gun, rushed out of the woods and started toward the boat! His long knife was in his hand, and he looked a perfect demon of fury, degenerate ignorance and hate! Mr. Jenkins saw Hamon, and he observed the knife, the fury, the hate, and the speed of the oncoming outlaw. He did not wait. Up the bank he came, Hamon after him. They shot through the weeds and out into the 'big road' which was level and dusty.

Charley and I ran too, at first, but we soon saw we could not keep up with that pair of race horses. We fell down flat in the weeds, and they thundered past us. A great cloud of dust arose in front of us and passed on north to the town. Our friend, the merchant who loaned us the lantern, said Jenkins won by fifty yards to his store, and broke the world's record for a quarter-mile.

Hamon gave up the chase just before he reached the village, and in a little while his



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boat had gone round the bend and was out of sight.

Hicks had made good his escape from Ginnie and came limping into town. Ginnie had peppered him with bird shot. Hicks took off his clothes, and I spent an hour with a pair of tweezers getting out the shot, which were just under the skin. As I worked on Hicks his remarks in reference to Ginnie certainly must have made her ears burn. After I had extracted all the lead, I touched up each shot-hole with a little iodine. When I had finished the job, it was hard to tell which Hicks resembled the more — a smallpox patient from the pesthouse, or the tattooed wild man from Borneo.

We had one satisfaction. We did not think the superintendent of the express company at Memphis would make us divide the reward with Jenkins if we ever were so fortunate as to land Hamon behind the bars. That afternoon I wrote the express company giving them all the information we had.



## CHAPTER VI

### *In Distress — Help from the Arkansas Pioneers*

So we floated on down, having a lot of fun and selling a lot of merchandise, but making much slower progress than we thought we should make. For one thing we had to work those sweeps about five times as much as we imagined would be necessary. Our hands were blistered and our backs were sore. Sometimes we got into eddies, which would turn us completely out of the main current and send us back in the opposite direction, headed for the bank.

The weather was hot, but there was nearly always a breeze out on the river, and we cooled off by taking one or more shower baths every day. You may wonder how we managed to enjoy a shower bath on *The Ocean Queen*. We might have jumped into the river and had a swim. We did swim on many occasions, but our swimming was generally done from the soft sandy shores of some of the islands. To jump off a boat into the channel of the lower Mississippi, where the water was perhaps one hundred to a hundred and fifty feet deep, was



## In Distress

not a safe way of getting a bath. There are many powerful 'suck holes' in this deep swift water, which might carry the swimmer to a sudden death.

The way the bather got his shower aboard The Ocean Queen was to stand on our stern deck with a cake of soap. One of the other boys would take his position on top of the cabin with a bucket attached to a piece of rope. He would throw the bucket into the river, draw it up, and pour the water down on the bather, slowly, or all at once according to orders received from below. The bucket had a large iron nut tied to one side to make it sink quickly. We always had to be careful to close the cabin door, so no water would splash on the finery in our 'parlor.'

Several days later I noticed John did not look very bright, or frisky, or happy. He sat round and yawned and stretched, and it was not long before he said he felt sick. He got pale, and became sicker and sicker. His lips and nails turned a dark blue, and he began to shiver and shake. He had a chill.

We wrapped nearly all the covers in the boat on him, but still he shook and was deathly sick. We gave him hot water to drink, and then put black pepper in the hot water to make it hotter.



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We also put his feet in hot water. We had no medicine of any kind for chills. It was at home on the hatrack. There was nothing else we could do. After a little while John quit shaking, and before long his fever began to rise. Then he became just as hot as he had been cold.

We decided to make a landing and go on the hunt for chill medicine — quinine or chill tonic, or anything we could find. We tied up to the Arkansas shore, and Charley and I started out in the woods to hunt for medicine. We followed the river-bank for a while and finally found a blazed trail. When the early settlers wanted to make a road through these great forests, they simply took an axe, and with a couple of strokes cut a big chip out of a tree, repeating this process about every hundred yards, sometimes on the right hand, sometimes on the left. When you found a blazed trail there was no chance to get lost, and you felt that you were traveling on a boulevard.

We followed this blazed trail, and after a while we came to a very faint road through the canebrakes and woods. We walked on in this road, I suppose, a mile and a half or two miles. Then we suddenly came to a small clearing in the great forest. The clearing covered maybe ten or fifteen acres, on which was growing a



## In Distress

very healthy-looking crop of tall, dark green Indian corn. There was also a field of several acres of cotton that stood about as high as a man's head. The field was surrounded by a high stake-and-rider rail fence. The clearing was full of the giant skeletons of once splendid trees, which had been deadened by having the bark cut all round the trunk. The trees had been set on fire and burned, and hacked and chopped, and got rid of in any possible way.

At the far side of this clearing was a two-room log house, with a large porch or passage-way between the rooms. A chimney made of mud and sticks stood at each end. Although the weather was hot, smoke was coming out of one of the chimneys, for these pioneers did all their cooking on the big wood fires in one or the other of the rooms. There was a little garden near the house. The garden was enclosed by a high fence made of pieces of split oak, which were about eight or nine feet long and three or four inches wide. These were nailed close together on a frame to keep out chickens, pigs, raccoons, and a lot of other 'varmints.' Beyond the garden was a small log stable and a corncrib, and a lot in which stood some sleepy mules.

As we approached this domicile, three or



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four long-eared, yellow hound dogs, some old and some young, ran out from under the house, and broke into a chorus of —

‘Bo who — Bo — oooooooooo — Bo-bo-bo-bo-who-ooooo.’

This was the original Arkansas burglar alarm. No citizen of Arkansas considered himself safe without anywhere from three to thirty hound dogs. It was simply impossible to approach a house closer than one hundred yards without being announced in a chorus of very loud and melodious voices belonging to these faithful watchers.

According to the etiquette of the times, we stopped on being announced by the barking of the dogs, and called out in a loud and long note:

‘Hel-l-o! Hel-l-o-o-o!’

After these formalities a tall and bony man appeared on the porch and called back:

‘Who’s thar?’

Charley and I both yelled out at once:

‘We want some chill medicine!’

‘What’s that?’ asked the bony man.

We repeated our request and he said:

‘Come on in. Git down thar, King; go back round thar, Flora. Shet your mouth, Savage. They ain’t a-goin’ to hurt you! — Who’s sick?’



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We got up on the porch as the dogs sneaked round and took our numbers according to their smell registration system, which is just as good as a thumb-print any day. We explained we had come down the river from Memphis and that one of our party had a hard chill.

‘Well,’ said the tall man, ‘we ain’t got much of anything, but sich as we have got, you are more than welcome to.’

He took us into one of the rooms and explained the situation to his wife, while a bunch of bashful, tow-headed children stood in the corner and looked on.

They got us a bottle of quinine, about three fourths of a bottle of chill tonic, a box of blue-mass pills and some calomel powders, also some empty five-grain capsules, all of which they put in a tin box and gave to us with many kindly instructions as to the best way to administer these medicines, as well as advice to be certain to look out for the third day and seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth chill days.

‘Here, Tom,’ called the tall head of the house, ‘you git old Beck and that thar young mule and ride back to the river with these young gentlemen.’

Tom put a bridle on Beck and a bridle on the



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young mule, but no saddles. Charley got up on old Beck, and I rode behind Tom, carrying the precious tin box. Tom was a little older than we were. Charley and I knew better than to offer any money in payment for the medicine. We thanked those good people profusely, but offered no money. It would have been refused, and the offer would only have hurt their feelings. Those pioneers were not fancy in some ways, but they had many sterling qualities that God intended good men to have. You could travel far without finding better people.

As we were ready to start, the mother of the family came to the door with a basket in her hand, and called to one of the children in the yard, 'Come here, Sallie Pearl, and take this basket to Tommie.'

Sallie Pearl ran out with a basket made of split white-oak strips.

'Tommie,' said the little girl, 'maw says fur you to kerry this here basket to Aunt Deal, and to ax her how she's a-feelin'.'

The basket contained some nice, fresh mustard greens, young onions, a fruit jar full of buttermilk, a pound of yellow butter, and a box of matches.

Tom took us back by a different and better road than the one by which we had come. Tom



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said Aunt Deal was 'a widow lady what lives over thar with one of her gals.'

When we arrived in front of Aunt Deal's, Tommie delivered the basket, and was duly thanked.

'Hit's turrible hot, ain't hit. Reckon hit's a-goin' to rain?' asked Tommie.

Aunt Deal sat down in a chair on the porch, with the basket in her lap. She removed from her mouth the little clay pipe she was smoking, and replied with great resignation:

'Tommie, I can't tell. I didn't git no almanac this year, and I just got to take the weather as the Lord sends it.'

Tommie soon brought us out on the bank of the river in sight of The Ocean Queen. Charley and I jumped off the mules and, after thanking our kind friend sincerely, made haste to the boat.

As we entered the cabin, we were surprised to see old Hicks on one of the cots with a lot of bed covers wrapped round him and shaking hard enough to loosen his teeth. Hicks also had a chill. John was on another cot — without any cover — very hot and very still.

Charley and I now had plenty of work to do. There were only two of us boys to navigate the boat and nurse the sick. We did not intend



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to stay tied to the bank all night and be eaten alive by mosquitoes.

I turned the running of the boat over to Charley and I took care of the sick. As I knew Charley was a boy of extra fine judgment and unlimited nerve, I felt perfectly safe, although he had no one to help him.

I wet some towels and put them on John's head, and bathed his hands, thus cooling his fever to some extent. The next morning when the fever had left him, I took some soda out of our pantry, mixed it with the calomel, and gave it to John, and that evening began giving him five grains of quinine at a time. I treated Hicks the same way, once in a while giving each a teaspoonful of chill tonic for good measure.

Charley had remained out on deck working the boat all night long by himself. He kept it in the middle of the channel as well as the most experienced shantyboat man could have done.

The next day we stopped out on another little sand-bar, when Charley and I put in most of our time sleeping. Hicks and John were much better, but weak, and they declared their ears roared like Niagara Falls from the effects of the quinine. It also made them very



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nervous. In the afternoon Charley and I went in swimming again, but the water had lost its charm for John on account of the malaria in his system. I also gave my patients a round of the blue-mass pills. It was not exactly what I should have prescribed, but it was all I had.

On the third day at their chill time I made both patients get in bed and cover up, having previously given them very large doses of quinine. They passed the chill time all right without any signs of a return of the disease, and we all felt very much better. Some people have chills every day, but most chills come every other day. The longer you let them run, the harder it is to rid your system of the malaria. I am proud to say neither of my patients had any more chills. I kept on giving them pretty big doses for a while, but the treatment killed the chills.



## CHAPTER VII

### *Treasure-Trove on an Uninhabited Island — Sale of Chill Tonic at Helena*

THE islands in the river had for us a peculiar charm. Nearly all of them were uninhabited. On the banks of the mainland there were people to stretch their necks and ask questions, but on the islands we felt free from any molesting element. Out there on those great beds of sand, we were as deserted and the silence was as intense as if we had been in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean. We never let an opportunity pass to land and explore these islands. That is one reason why we progressed so slowly.

One day not so very far north of Helena, Arkansas, we sighted an island that was perhaps two miles in length and from a quarter to a half-mile in width. Part of the island was covered with a thick growth of willows and young cottonwood trees. At the foot of the island were great stretches of pure soft sand fluted in graceful ruffles by the wind and water. We landed and Charley and I started out with the shotgun and rifle to ramble over it from



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end to end in search of any adventure we could find, while John and Hicks got dinner.

We walked round the head of the island and then crept through the willows, which were very thick. We expected to find game, and were prepared, but everything was still and deserted. Finding nothing in the willows, we pushed on to the foot of the island, and came out on the open sand. The air was refreshing, and we felt more lively at once. There was a small pool of water in a sunken place in the sand. Charley stepped into it with his bare feet and began to wash the mud from his legs. Then he playfully gave a kick with one foot, for the purpose of splattering water on me. But I was surprised to see him double up, and fall down on the sand, grabbing his foot in his hands, with evident expressions of sudden pain.

‘Jiminy,’ groaned Charley, ‘I nearly busted my toe.’

We made an investigation and found that Charley had kicked the sharp corner of some peculiar object buried in the sand. We scooped the water out of the small pool with our feet and hands, and began to dig away the sand. It was a big, heavy box. Visions of buried gold and other treasure flashed into our minds. We knew much gold and silver money and table-



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ware had been buried during the Civil War. We got sticks and dug away the sand as best we could, but we soon saw that the box was bound by wire bands, and was very large and heavy.

We decided to get Hicks and John. However, we agreed that it would not do to leave the treasure unprotected, so Charley said he would run back to the boat while I stood guard with the gun.

At length Charley came back with John and Hicks. They brought a small axe, a shovel, two or three iron bars, and a hatchet. They were much excited, and old Hicks was having a hard time navigating the sand with his peg leg.

We all attacked the box, and hammered and dug and chopped, until we finally got it loose, so that by our united efforts we could roll it out of its bed. Hicks took the axe and hatchet and pried off the top.

Then to our popping eyes was revealed a vast quantity of chill tonic, put up in the standard fifty-cent bottles. It was drugs we had — not gold. We afterward counted the bottles and found the case contained exactly six gross, or seventy-two dozen bottles, of perfectly good chill tonic, even if the labels were a little wet and faded.





VISIONS OF BURIED GOLD AND OTHER TREASURE  
FLASHED INTO OUR MINDS







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We were dumbfounded, and sat down on the box and in the sand to hold a consultation. It was plain that this box was treasure-trove. We had found it here on an absolutely deserted and uninhabited island. It may have come from some wrecked steamboat. No one could tell how long it had been there or to whom it had ever belonged. We decided that by all rules and marine customs and admiralty law, we were the lawful owners of all of this good chill tonic.

‘We’ll make it two bottles for fifty cents,’ said John. ‘We will drop down to Helena and hold a sale right off the boat, and cure all the chills in those parts. Six gross at “two for fifty” will net more than two hundred dollars, won’t it, Charley?’

We figured this out and found that the eight hundred and sixty-four bottles at twenty-five cents each, or two for fifty cents, would come to two hundred and sixteen dollars. The four of us had to make about six or seven round trips to the boat, carrying all the chill tonic we could lug. Old Hicks fastened a tin can over the end of his peg leg so he could walk in the soft sand.

We had boxes and pans full, all of our pockets were crammed full, and a lot was stuffed



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under our shirts. Dinner was forgotten, and we got every bottle on board without breaking one, because the bottles would not crack when we dropped them on the sand.

Now that we had a full cargo of chill tonic in our vessel, we began to feel very important. The quicker we could get to Helena and hold the great sale on the levee, the better it would suit us. We made very elaborate preparations. We had all the chill tonic stacked up on the forward deck, so that from a front view it appeared that the boat was literally built of chill tonic. John was to do the talking, I was to take care of the 'stock' and hand out the bottles to the customers. Charley was to sit on a keg near John and act as cashier, taking in the money and making change. Hicks was to have charge of the boat, and see that no one came in the back door.

We sighted the city of Helena early the next morning, and came up to the levee near the wharf-boat in grand style. We put into the levee bow on, so the boat would look like nothing but chill tonic. Hicks had caught our enthusiasm, and put out about six or seven lines to hold the Queen in exactly the right position close up on the levee, so the crowds could be accommodated without drowning



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any one. The people did not know what to make of us, but just stood and watched with open mouths.

John took some money and went uptown. Before noon he came back with a bundle of handbills he had had printed, and which read about as follows:

### *THE OCEAN QUEEN*

WITH A FULL CARGO OF

### *CHILL TONIC*

is now on the levee alongside the wharf-boat. By handling in immense quantities we are able to offer this standard article in your city for to-day only at the unheard-of price of —

**TWO BOTTLES FOR FIFTY CENTS!**

**COME ONE — COME ALL!**

**SALE STARTS PROMPTLY AT 2 P.M.**

Why shiver and shake when you can get  
this wonderful tonic at

**TWO FOR HALF A DOLLAR?**

Also a full line of general merchandise.

**Y. & M. V. NAVIGATION COMPANY**

We three boys went up and down the levee,  
on the wharf-boat and through the town dis-



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tributing the handbills. Some citizens smiled when they read our advertisement, but it was serious business for us.

As a matter of fact the residence portion of Helena is, to a large extent, built on very high ground, which is the end of Crawley's Ridge, and the place is healthful enough, but, as I shall soon show you, there were plenty of people in town that day from the bottoms and up and down the river who were interested in chill tonic.

We all dressed for the occasion. Even Hicks had a clean shave. I had on my beloved blue flannel shirt, with my sleeves and trousers rolled up. John wore a red-and-white striped shirt, and a very large green silk tie, with a very high stiff collar, and a little brown derby hat. He had on several rings, and a pair of patent-leather dancing-pumps. Charley was arrayed in all of his silk finery, the same that he wore the day we left Memphis. He had also dug up from some place a very large charcoal pencil. He had this behind his ear, and with his serious countenance he certainly looked as if he were ready for business. I don't know what he was going to do with the pencil, as we scarcely expected any of our customers to open charge accounts, but that big pencil



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stands out very vividly in my recollection. Charley got all the money there was in the boat. He had a lot of bills arranged between his fingers, and a box full of silver in front of him.

Romeo sat on top of the cabin slowly eating a banana and unconsciously did his part to attract a crowd.

John walked up on the levee, and took off his hat in the manner of the ringmaster of a big circus making a speech to call attention to the extraordinary concert to follow; 'L-A-D-I-E-S AND G-E-N-T-L-E-M-E-N,' called John, in very loud and long-drawn-out tones. 'The sale of standard chill tonic — the regular fifty-cent size, at two bottles for half a dollar, will now begin on board The Ocean Queen. Step this way everybody, if you please.'

A large crowd began to gather. There were roustabouts and country negroes, white people from the shantyboats near by, and a lot of citizens from the town.

John mounted a box on the bow in front of our great stock of chill tonic, and began his oration.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' he declaimed in a high-pitched voice, 'we are here to-day in your beautiful city with a cargo of chill tonic — the



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very best chill tonic under Heaven — which we are able to sell at half-price, or two bottles for fifty cents, because we are a *trust*. Some people don't like trusts, but they are mistaken in this. I will show you that trusts are a great benefit to the world, for we are a trust and we are able to save you twenty-five cents on every bottle of this merchandise. In other words, we cure your chills and make you a present of twenty-five cents — *a quarter of a dollar*, or two dimes and a nickel — absolutely free of charge. A *trust* means simply this — I trust you and you trust me — that is a trust.'

The negroes' eyes began to get bigger and whiter. John Guheen's face got redder and redder, as he spoke with ever-increasing emphasis, his great green tie flaunting out in the river breeze, and his arms cutting the air in every direction.

'We have here,' yelled John, holding up in his hand a bottle of chill tonic, 'one of the most wonderful remedies ever compounded by the medical and pharmaceutical professions.' Those large words suited his audience, which was getting interested.

'It will not only cure chills and fevers and agues, but it will PURIFY YOUR BLOOD, and tone up your entire system. We are selling



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this medicine under a positive guarantee. After you have taken six gross of this tonic, if you have another chill, come right back here to this spot on which my feet now rest, and we will give you the boat. If you have any ache or pain in any part of the body, take two teaspoonfuls before each meal and at bedtime, and rub five drops of the tonic on the affected part, and the pain will leave you. Give your wife three teaspoonfuls before each meal and at bedtime, and rub ten drops of the tonic on the back of her neck, and she will leave you. My HEAVENS! gentlemen, you cannot refuse this great benefit to mankind! Two whole bottles for fifty cents! Anybody else now? Don't crowd, gentlemen;—we have a full cargo and our clerks will supply you all.'

You should have seen the withering look Charley shot at John when he called him a 'clerk.' The crowd simply fought to get the bargain in chill tonic. The air was full of black hands and white hands holding up money. John kept on talking. He vividly described the symptoms and various stages of a hard chill. He was well acquainted with his subject, and his audience knew enough to know his descriptions were accurate. They were sympathetic. Charley was covered with money.



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Hicks had to hold them back to keep them from running over him. I was handing out pairs of bottles as fast as I could work my arms, and yelling at Charley all the time for change. John never let up, and every customer that went away with two bottles would tell some one else, and more people would come down to The Ocean Queen.

Some customers would buy half a dozen or a dozen bottles at a time. This kept up for an hour or more, until we had only about a dozen bottles left.

Suddenly I saw a quick change in John's face. He stopped talking, and his gaze was fixed on one spot. I looked out in the crowd, and there was Hamon!

In a moment Hamon pointed his finger at John, squinted his eyes, snapped his jaws with a click, and said:

'What did you lie to me for? Here you are with that dog — Hicks, whut throwed my wife in the river.'

As he said 'Hicks,' he seemed to fly into an uncontrollable passion. He leaped like a tiger at Hicks.

Our friend with the peg leg hesitated not. He dived instantly into the Mississippi River, on the deep side of the boat while John fell off



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his box and tumbled head first into the river on the shallow side. The crowd was panic-stricken and scattered in every direction to get out of the way. Charley was busy picking up money all over the deck. A deputy sheriff came aboard with a drawn pistol. Hamon grappled with the sheriff, wrenched the pistol from his hand, and threw it on the deck. Then with one powerful blow on the officer's jaw he knocked him senseless. Hamon leaped to the levee, pursued by Wag, ran under a wharf, and passed up the bank into a thicket of willows and escaped.

Hicks swam ashore, and when he came out of the water he was shaking like a dog. He said he trembled on account of the sudden ducking, but we thought there were other reasons.

Some other officers came up and revived their fallen comrade, while we told them what we knew about Hamon and asked them to capture him if they could.

We picked up some more of the scattered money, shut all the doors and got inside and counted it. We had two hundred and one dollars. Maybe we lost some of the money, but we felt pretty rich with two hundred dollars in real cash which was all clear profit as the proceeds of treasure-trove chill tonic.



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But the sweets of life are often followed by the bitter. We had not enjoyed our newly acquired wealth over half an hour when a policeman came aboard and wanted to see our 'privilege license.' We did not know anything about a 'privilege license,' but we wanted to play the game fair and square and meet all our lawful obligations.

Charley got his leather sack of money and he and I went up to the Mayor's office to see about this license business. The clerk in the city hall told us our privilege license would cost five dollars a day. We could take it out for as many days as we pleased, he said, but we must not sell anything unless we had a license for each and every day we were doing business. We dug ten dollars out of the bag and bought a license for two days. The clerk gave us a certificate, which we took back and tacked up in The Ocean Queen store. We certainly did hate to part with that ten dollars, but every one has to do his share for the public good.



## CHAPTER VIII

*Our Roustabout — Wag, Romeo, and Polly — Hamon  
and the Paper Trail — Queenie La Farge*

WE had created so much excitement in Helena and were being so much talked about that the next morning we began at once to do a thriving business. John and Hicks ran the store while Charley and I hurried uptown to lay in a new stock. Our goods were running low and in some lines our supply was exhausted. Charley's father had given him a letter to show to wholesalers when we wished to purchase. I think this letter was of great value to us. Mr. Kerr had told us to do business in each town and every landing just as if we expected to remain in that town or landing all the rest of our lives. We did not forget this and were as polite and kind and square with all with whom we dealt as we knew how to be.

We decided to add to our stock a line of standard drugs and leading patent medicines. We visited a wholesale drug house and bought what we thought we could sell. After replenishing our other lines, we bought a second-hand ice-box and had it sent aboard. We had



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enjoyed such a strong demand at every landing for 'ice-cold soda pop' that we thought we could use two ice-boxes. We bought a big lot of soda pop and put two hundred pounds of ice in each box.

Charley made every merchant give us a discount for cash, and we had everything rushed down to 'The Ocean Queen, at the Wharf-Boat.'

During our stay in Helena we had been assisted by a young negro named Abe Polk. He was very capable and bright and as strong as a circus actor. After consultation with the other members of our party, I asked Abe if he would like to go down the river with us to New Orleans. Without a moment's hesitation he answered: 'Yes, sir.'

I had an understanding with Abe as to what his weekly wages would be. He made us a faithful roustabout. The fact was that all of us were about broken down working those sweeps. If we had been simply floating down the middle of the river, it would not have been hard, but we landed so often to trade that there was a great amount of labor involved.

As we were getting some stove wood and bundles and boxes aboard, preparing to make our departure, I sat on a barrel on the levee



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near the boat talking to a very old, gray-haired negro. Referring to the events of the previous day, I remarked:

‘The Doc. used some awful big words, didn’t he, Uncle?’

‘He sho’ did. I declar he did,’ replied the uncle.

‘He talked about a gross, Uncle. I wonder how much is a gross?’

The old man turned his head on one side, looked thoughtfully at the ground, and replied:

‘Well, my old marster teach me four jiggers make one gill, an’ two gills make one gross. Er jigger ain’t hardly a teaspoonful, an’ er gill ain’t er good dram. Er gross jis’ ’bout whut you call a good mouthful. He say ef you take six er dem grosses, an’ den on top er dat you have airy nuther chill, fer you to come right dar whar his footses standin’, an’ den he giv’ you dat little yaller boat. Yah! Yah! Yah!’

As I boarded the gangplank, the old uncle took a bottle of chill tonic out of his coat-tail pocket, gave it a shake and swallowed a dram, as he waved us farewell.

That afternoon we shoved off before quite a little crowd, with our flags flying, bound for Vicksburg and way landings.

We had taken on a fresh supply of drinking-



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water, groceries, meats, and vegetables; we had made a lot of money, and we had all received letters from home and had written replies, so we were very, very happy.

Old Hicks had bought some screen wire, and had it neatly tacked on all the windows, and had made two nice little door frames to fit our two small doors. As we floated down the river we finished the screening job by putting the wire on the new door frames and hanging them. Not a single fly or mosquito was allowed to live for a minute inside the cabin or store, so that our comfort and health were now much improved.

Hicks had rigged up a small rope ladder and stretched it between our two masts. Romeo gave numerous aërial performances each day on this ladder, to our great delight. He would swing by one hand and he would swing by his tail, but he never fell. A monkey hates a bath worse than any animal I can think of. Romeo was very careful not to fall into the Mississippi River. At landings he wore a collar and chain, but out on the river he had his liberty.

When Romeo was tired climbing and jumping, he would come down in the shade of the after deck, where he would generally find Wag taking a nap. Romeo was firm in his belief



## Hamon and the Paper Trail

that Wag had fleas on him. As a matter of fact Wag seldom had a flea about him, as he took baths in the river every day and we scrubbed him with tar soap and kept him clean. However, Romeo would sit there on his haunches for hours at a time and search Wag's curly hair for fleas. Wag seemed to enjoy the process. He would sleep blissfully on as Romeo parted his hair in his two hands with almost human dexterity. But one time, farther down the river, Wag went ashore and played all day with some other dogs and came home full of fleas. When Romeo discovered Wag's condition, he nearly had a fit. He chattered and grabbed frantically after the fleas, and had a grand time thinning them out.

Polly had a perch against the cabin wall near the stern door. She would sit there in silence for long periods, just blinking her eyes and thinking. But in the cool of the morning she would start to work and click off her conversation as regularly as a telegraph instrument. Only one message went over her wires. It was a ten-word message which read like this:

'Quarter less four — Here Wag! Here Wag! Ha, Ha, Ha!'

She got the right tone to her voice. The 'quarter less four' she sang in a mournful voice



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just as she had heard Hicks call it out when casting the lead.

Soon after we left Helena we came to a long lake, on the Arkansas side, which may have been a part of the Mississippi River at one time. The lake was connected with the river by a narrow passage and wound back in the dense forests we knew not how far.

This looked like a fine place to hunt. There were one or two houses on the river-bank and several shantyboats in the lake tied to trees. We worked the Queen through the passage and made her fast to a cypress knee.

John, Charley, and I walked up the bank and started for what appeared to be a little store facing the lake about a quarter of a mile away. Charley wanted to buy a new harmonica.

While we were yet a hundred and fifty yards away, we could hardly believe our eyes when Hamon walked out of the store carrying something in a sack over his shoulder! Fortunately he turned and went off in the other direction and did not see us. We went forward slowly, taking care that Hamon did not get a look at us.

At the front door of the store we were met by a smiling girl of about fifteen years of age. We are all still willing to admit that we were in-



## Hamon and the Paper Trail

stantly captivated by the charms of this young person. She had a great amount of jet-black hair, flying around wild like, and hazel eyes, and a robust and athletic figure which was a guarantee of health and strength. Her kind disposition shone out through her sweet smile.

I remember Charley at once pulled from his pocket a large white silk handkerchief with a blue-and-white polka dot border, that he had bought in Helena, and flourished it around a time or two, made a pretense of wiping his mouth, and remarked:

‘Do you know that the man who just went out of here is a train-robber, and a mail-robber, a bank-robber, an’ everything? There’s five thousand dollars reward for him, dead or alive, an’ we are trying to get him arrested.’

We had actually almost lost our fear of Hamon for a few moments in the radiance of this beautiful young girl. She answered Charley quickly:

‘Well, you better watch out. He’s coming right back here in a minute after his other sack of groceries. Does he know you are trying to arrest him?’

‘Well, I should rather reckon he does,’ replied John, as he felt one of his ears to see if it was still fastened to his head.



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‘You-all come on in here in papa’s office,’ said the young lady. ‘My father is a justice of the peace, but he and his two officers have gone bear-hunting. My name is Queenie La Farge.’

We went into ‘papa’s office’ without delay, and introduced ourselves to Miss La Farge.

‘If my father and his two deputies, Mr. Fairplay and Mr. Spearhead, were here, I bet they would arrest that man, but they may not come home until to-night,’ said Miss Queenie. ‘I betcher this train-robber who has just been in our store and bought a lot of supplies is going way back there in the swamp to old man Ruby’s boat. He’s an outlaw hermit who has lived back there in a shantyboat for years and years and nobody ever bothers him.’

John wrinkled his brow and said: ‘If we could just track Hamon in some way until your papa comes back. Bill, how could we shadow Hamon and still keep in touch with the officers?’

I scratched my head and suddenly a vision of the game all our schoolboys had played on Saturdays that year came to me — hare and hounds!

‘I’ll tell you!’ I exclaimed. ‘Let’s tear up a lot of paper and put it in a sack and follow Hamon and leave a paper trail behind us, like



## Hamon and the Paper Trail

we did when we played hare and hounds, so the officers can follow us and arrest that old thief.'

'Fine!' exclaimed John and Charley in chorus.

Queenie bounded across the room to a book-case and jerked out a great pile of old newspapers, and we all began to tear them in little pieces about an inch square.

'I'll lend you my school bag to hold the paper,' said Queenie. She brought out a large bag which was made of flimsy material and coated with some kind of rubber coating supposed to make it waterproof. There was a leather strap attached to the bag.

We were all there in the Squire's office which adjoined the store, ripping up those papers like 'putting out fire,' but we had not finished the job when some heavy feet thumped up the store steps. Queenie peeped through a door in the partition, and nodded to us. Then she went into the store and shut the door behind her. We knew Hamon was in the store. We tore paper as fast as we could, but I know my fingers trembled a little.

After a few minutes Queenie came back to us. She was calm and steady, but her face was flushed and as pretty as a rose.

'I'm pretending I can't find the key to the



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showcase. I'm looking for it now, so you will have time to tear up more paper,' she whispered.

Queenie delayed Hamon in one way and another until we had her school satchel crammed full of hare and hounds paper.

'We have no time to go back to the boat for guns and pistols,' whispered John. 'Hamon might go on off and we would lose the trail.'

Queenie heard the remark and at once stepped behind a closet door and came out with a big pearl-handled, forty-five caliber pistol. She offered it to Charley.

'Is that the only weapon you have in the house?' asked Charley.

Queenie nodded. All the other weapons had gone bear-hunting.

Turning to us, in a grand manner, Charley swept his silk handkerchief through the air in a large circle and said:

'What would we look like, taking this young lady's only weapon? Of course not — certainly not — we wouldn't think of such a thing.'

Charley bowed low. Queenie smiled and her eyes flashed. John and I stood there in silent admiration. We were proud of both of them.

Then we heard Hamon going down the



## Hamon and the Paper Trail

store steps. We whispered to Queenie that we would leave a good plain trail, dropping paper every fifty yards or so, and asked her to send her father and the two deputies as soon as they came home.



## CHAPTER IX

### *Trailing Hamon — A Night in the Forest*

WE left Squire La Farge's office about an hour before sundown. John carried the school satchel full of paper, with the strap over his shoulder. We saw Hamon join another man, and the pair of them made off into the virgin forest, each one with a sack on his back.

We had to be extremely careful not to attract the attention of the men we were following. We slipped along from tree to tree as far behind Hamon as possible, and every little while John would scatter some of the paper on the thick carpet of leaves upon which we were walking. That white man-made paper was as noticeable in the forest as a lighted electric bulb in the dark.

We kept this up steadily for an hour, then we saw Hamon and his companion put their loads in a 'dugout' canoe. The two men got into the canoe and paddled maybe a quarter of a mile out into the gloomy, swampy lake to a little shantyboat. We watched them unload the canoe and enter the shantyboat. It was not Hamon's boat. In a few minutes we could



## A Night in the Forest

see smoke coming out of the stovepipe in the roof.

‘Right here is where we make five thousand dollars,’ said John. ‘Squire La Farge and his two officers will be coming out here directly — they can’t miss that paper trail — you know they can’t — and we can just get behind trees and fire five or six shots and old Hamon will come over here as certain as anything to see who did the shooting. Mr. Fairplay and Mr. Headspear — I mean Spearhead — will step out just like this — and throw their guns down on Hamon and say; “Hands up”; and all we’ll have to do will be to spend the money. It’s an awful bother to be rich; don’t you think so, Bill?’

That sounded fine, but we waited and waited in vain, hoping every moment to hear the approaching officers. We began to be affected by the world of gloom around us. We were quiet and serious.

The lake stretched away for miles and miles as far as the eye could reach — a still sheet of black water, studded with thousands of little islands, covered with various and wonderful kinds of wild grasses. Immense trees extended their gaunt arms on every hand and the whole scene was enveloped in the oppressive and aw-



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ful stillness of death. As the day faded and died the long shadows stretched across many a lonely island and the trees seemed to become darker and to take on the forms of huge animals and terrible wriggling serpents. In every dark covert some beast of prey seemed to lurk, and we found ourselves constantly turning to look behind our backs — for Hamon or some other danger, we knew not what.

Before we realized it darkness spread over the forest and we could not have followed our paper trail, even if we had wanted to do so. We knew enough about the woods to know that to try to go through the utter darkness in these unfamiliar swamps would mean that we should be hopelessly lost and in a very serious position. We might easily have walked a hundred miles without coming to any house.

I had a pocketful of matches and John had some more matches in a case he always carried.

‘Well, let’s go way back out here away from the lake and build a fire,’ said Charley. ‘I’ll tell you what we can do. We’ll build a small fire behind a big log, so the log will be between the fire and Hamon. Then he can’t see it.’

We stumbled through the woods for some distance until we found a fallen log, the top of



## A Night in the Forest

which would have been above the tallest man's head. Behind this big log we soon started a fire and felt a little more comfortable.

As we lay down on the leaves and tried to go to sleep, Nature's orchestra filled our ears. There were dozens of musicians in this concert, but I can name only a few. The soprano rôle was sung by Miss Panther. No grand-opera singer ever had a stronger or more piercing voice. At intervals her blood-curdling scream, as of some woman in distress, maybe being murdered, would split the wilderness in twain, and I'm going to tell the truth — about that time I wished I was back in Memphis. Then swelled up a great chorus of wolves, near and far, all howling at once. When the music of the others ebbed low, old Mr. Owl would seize the opportunity to sing out the only line the Lord allowed him:

‘Who? Who? Who are you?’

Home looked pretty good to us, about that time, too.

Then there was a whole host of small musicians, all doing their best. Among these were katydids, locusts, crickets, mosquitoes, bullfrogs singing bass and many others which only the microscope could reveal.

We passed a bad night. The mosquitoes bit



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us and we worried over the fact that we had left Hicks and Abe without any explanation as to our absence. Of course, the whole affair was entirely unexpected to us.

But what a change came on, as the eastern sky began to light up and redden. The musicians of the night had all gone home and gone to bed. In their place was an entirely new orchestra, which played a different kind of music. Every sound was joyous and hopeful. Many strange little birds chirped and whistled and sang to say that all was well. The whole vast panorama, as of ten thousand drop-curtains, was now gilded by the rising sun, and instead of the serpents and 'varmints' of the night, lurking in dark places, a thousand fairies seemed to inhabit every isle, and bid us welcome.

We went back and found our paper trail. 'You see there,' said Charley, 'suppose we had not found that trail. John, you better put out plenty of paper wherever we go, so we can find our way back.'

John complied with Charley's suggestion and we went down to the bank of the lake scattering paper behind us like a young snow-storm. We drank some lake water, and washed our faces and hands and peered out at the



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shantyboat. Smoke was coming out of the pipe, but the 'dugout' was gone.

Suddenly we heard a stick snap and looking through the trees we saw Hamon examining the bits of newspaper.

Hamon was on our trail!

Panic seized us! We ran for our lives! I don't know whether Hamon saw us or not, but he heard us running and started in pursuit!



## CHAPTER X

*Chased by Hamon — John is Treed — Queenie and Squire La Farge Save Our Lives*

JOHN was the fastest runner. He took the lead and fairly 'burnt the wind,' crashing through underbrush, knocking down small trees and leaping over logs that would have balked a good steeplechaser — but he was dropping paper! In his wild flight through the brush he had torn a hole in that school satchel and was leaving a paper trail behind him! We could hear Hamon coming and he was gaining on us!

Charley yelled to John:

'Throw away that bag — you fool! You are dropping paper!'

John claims he did not hear any one tell him to cast aside the bag of paper. If he did, he was too excited to give any heed to remarks in his rear. All his faculties were centered on trying to outrun Hamon.

Hamon ran us until our tongues hung out. Charley and I thought of turning off in a different direction to get away from John and his telltale paper, but we did not want to desert John with Hamon on his trail. So we ran on



## Queenie and Squire La Farge

and on, never being able to get close enough to John to stop the flow of paper.

At last, when we were almost exhausted and realized that Hamon was going to overtake us, we caught sight of Queenie and several men on horseback dashing through the woods on our trail. We thought we were saved, but to our horror Queenie and her companions seemed to lose the paper trail and ran off as hard as they could go in the wrong direction. Then Charley and I simply could not run any farther. So we quickly crawled up in a big old fallen hollow log. We were trembling all over and expected to see John murdered at any moment.

We peeped out of the log and saw Hamon walking all round in a circle as if he were bewildered. John had vanished. The ground seemed to have swallowed him.

It was several minutes after that when Charley spied John's feet up in the top of a young sweet-gum tree right over Hamon's head. John still had the bag of paper with the strap over his shoulder. He was well concealed by the thick foliage.

Hamon was at the end of the paper trail and could not tell what had become of John. Hamon had a spotted hound 'coon dog' with



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him, which I think belonged to the old outlaw who lived in the boat. The hound kept trotting round in circles and before long he stopped right at the foot of John's tree. The hound jumped up the side of the tree as if he intended to climb it and let out a long howl.

John was treed.

Hamon at once looked up and saw our poor companion and shipmate! Hamon then drew a long black pistol from its holster and called out to John:

'You been a-settin' the law on me all the way from Memphis down here, an' I ain't never harmed you none a-tall. Now I'm a-goin' to kill you like a dog an' be shed of you!'

Hamon raised his long pistol! Charley and I both screamed at the same time and scrambled out of the log. Hamon heard us and turned his head. Just then four horses galloped through the brush and there came Squire La Farge, Deputy Spearhead, Deputy Fairplay, and Queenie! They had found the trail again just in time.

Hamon dashed off. He took longer strides when he was running than any man I ever saw. Before Hamon had run fifty yards I was surprised to see him disappear in a tall canebrake.



## Queenie and Squire La Farge

The officers did not even get a shot at him. Mr. Spearhead started to follow Hamon, but Squire La Farge stopped him.

‘Hold on there, Spearhead,’ called the Squire. ‘You like to commit suicide? No? Well, then you better stay out that canebrake. You go in that canebrake after that outlaw, he kill you certain. He keep still and you cannot see him in those thick cane, but he can tell every move you make by the sound and the shaking of the leaves. It’s good thing to be brave, but I wouldn’t give two cents for any man what not got better sense than to commit suicide.’

John climbed down out of the sweet-gum tree, still scattering a few pieces of paper. Queenie introduced us. Squire La Farge, as you can tell of course from his name, was of French descent. His complexion was dark and he wore a long black mustache and a goatee. The best way I can describe him is to say he was like a game rooster. He was very polite and was graceful in all his movements. Although he was a pioneer, he had a grand kind of way about him, as if he had learned his manners in some European court, and any fool could tell that he was not afraid of anything that walked. Queenie had inherited her queenly bearing from her father. That must



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have been the reason she was given the nickname 'Queenie.'

Queenie was wearing a light-colored corduroy riding-suit and was astride a young chestnut sorrel that looked as if he had thoroughbred in him. With the great green forest as a background she made a wonderful picture.

'Just to think,' remarked John, 'I ran fourteen miles and stopped fifty yards short of that canebrake, where I should have been safe, and climbed a tree which meant certain death but for you gentlemen. Such is life.'

Of course John exaggerated the distance he had run, but that's what he said. I reckon the run just seemed that long to him. The paper trail enabled us to follow Hamon, made it easy for Hamon to follow us, and made it possible for the officers to follow Hamon, so it all worked out to save our lives at last. But it was a close call. I never want to track any more criminals with 'hare and hounds' paper.

John and I climbed up behind Mr. Fairplay and Mr. Spearhead and Charley jumped up behind Squire La Farge, but the Squire's horse at once began to kick and jump about and rub against trees, until Charley had to tumble off.

'This animal will never carry double,' said the Squire. 'Every time we try it she acts like



## Queenie and Squire La Farge

the bumble bee was stingin' her. Queenie — jump down — precious — and let Mr. Kerr ride your horse. You ride behind.'

Charley cast one furtive but expressive glance at me and strutted over and mounted Queenie's handsome little chestnut sorrel. Then he walked his horse up to a log, where Queenie gracefully sprang up behind — and held on to Charley. He says that was the nicest ride he ever had.

We had breakfast with the Squire. There was a great dish of fried bear meat cutlets at one end of the table, and a large platter of broiled venison steak at the other end. The bear meat was coarse and greasy. We secretly liked the venison better than the bear, but none of us would make any such damaging admission because it might injure our reputations as bear-hunters.

After breakfast Charley bought a harmonica. Queenie waited on him and it took them a long time to close the transaction. Then we invited the Squire and Queenie and Mr. Spearhead and Mr. Fairplay to take supper with us on the Queen at half-past five that evening. When we were on the store porch taking our leave, Charley bowed very low to Queenie and kissed her hand — very delicately and gracefully.



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As we walked to the boat, Charley was all smiles.

‘Hot dog!’ he exclaimed. ‘I’ve found the sweetest little gal in the Mississippi Valley.’

By the time we reached the Queen we were all scratching chigre bites. During the night on the ground by that big dead log hundreds of female chigres had crawled on us and buried themselves under our skins. Most boys have formed an acquaintance with chigres. They are very small red bugs that dig right in under the skin, and each one will make a sore unless it is killed. We all enjoyed shower baths, and then we got out the chloroform bottle and took turnabout putting chloroform on each other’s bites. This is the one best way to kill a chigre. Just chloroform her. The chloroform is cheap and is effective. Chigres can also be killed by rubbing with salt and kerosene. It is an excellent plan to rub on some kerosene as a preventive, before going into the woods.

That afternoon, as Charley sat on a box in the cabin making a critical examination of John’s guitar, he asked:

‘John, what will you take for this guitar?’

‘I don’t know, Kerr,’ answered John: ‘what are you going to do with it?’

Charley grinned a very wide grin, showing



## Queenie and Squire La Farge

his fine teeth, and blushed. 'I want to give it to Queenie to-night when she comes down here,' answered Charley.

'Oh, well, of course,' replied John, 'if it's anything of life-and-death importance like that — take it along — the guitar is yours. And here's a nice piece of red ribbon you can tie on it. I know this is fine ribbon because my best girl sent it to me around a box of candy the day we left Memphis. Oh, Hicks — when we get to Vicksburg I wish you would remind me to buy some ribbon. Kerr is getting tangled up with the ladies, so we'll have to throw out the soda pop and put in a stock of ribbons, millinery, etc.'

Right here I wish to say that the relation described as existing in this story between John, Charley, and me really existed in fact. We have passed through much joy and sorrow. We have been rich and we have been poor, we have been wonderfully blessed, and death has laid its blighting hand upon our loved ones, but the three of us who went down the river in *The Ocean Queen* all still live close together, and go fishing every time we get a chance, and in all these years no cross word has ever passed from one of us to another.

I don't think I ever enjoyed any banquet



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more than I did that one on our little boat that night. Good old Hicks and Abe had cooked a wonderful supper, and now that the Queen was screened it was nice inside. It does not get dark down there in the delta at that time of the year until after eight o'clock. Our guests remained a good while, and when they said 'Good-night,' Charley gave Queenie a big bottle of 'Florida' water and the beautiful silk handkerchief, carefully laundered, with its polka-dot border of blue and white, and John's guitar, all shined up and wearing a pretty red ribbon around its neck. It was the best he had. The next day we all went over on the lake and found the old hermit in his boat. He said Hamon had left during the night and gone to his boat which he had hid in Goose Lake, and was 'probably by this time way down the Mississippi River.'



## CHAPTER XI

### *The Bear-Hunt at La Farge Landing*

ABOUT sundown John and Charley and I went up to Squire La Farge's to tell everybody good-bye. According to Charley this was quite important. As we all sat on the porch, Squire La Farge said:

'It will be one shame for you gentlemen to coast all along the great State of Arkansas, which is known as the Bear State, and not engage in a bear-hunt. There is one grand, great bear near here in the thick canebrake, which we intend to kill before long. He is as big as a cow. If you gentlemen will do us the honor to be our guests for to-morrow, we'll do our best to give you the chance for to cut that bear's throat with your knife. Ha, ha; you not like to do that? All right, then, gentlemen, we give you good bear gun and let you shoot him. What you say?'

We could not possibly decline an invitation like that, so we agreed to stay just one more day and go bear-hunting in the Arkansas canebrakes.

We talked so much 'bear-talk' that night



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that it was very late before any of us got to sleep. Hicks entertained us by telling how he had killed several extra large brown, black, and cinnamon bears on various occasions.

We were all up and ready the next morning by daylight. Charley carried a murderous knife which Hicks produced from some secret hiding-place and loaned to him for the occasion. Charley also had one of our shotguns, loaded with buckshot, and the 'horse' pistol. As he walked up the bank he certainly looked the part of a bloodthirsty pirate. John had our other shotgun. Squire La Farge loaned me and Hicks two big old muzzle-loading rifles. They used percussion caps and carried a very large ball.

Mr. Fairplay and Mr. Spearhead with several of their friends were on hand. About thirty bear hounds of all sizes, ages, colors, and descriptions eagerly trotted about and smelled everything with the greatest pleasure and enthusiasm.

'Now, I'm going to put you on the very best "stands,"' said Squire La Farge to us. 'And Mr. Fairplay and Mr. Spearhead are going into the canebreak with the dogs and make the "drive." When you hear the dogs fighting the bear anywhere near you, then you must ap-



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proach very close to that old bear and be very careful not to shoot one of our fine dogs. Just take your time and shoot him in the heart. Don't try to shoot him in the head. If you did not kill him, he might get mad and smack you over. You know, gentlemen, the Arkansas bear is some "smacker." "

They put me on one bank of Big Creek and Hicks on the other, about fifty yards away. The other men were stationed at certain places, called 'stands,' where it was supposed most likely the bear would pass by.

We waited for several hours in the oppressive silence of the forest and Hicks and I carried on an intermittent conversation across the creek. Between Hicks and me there was a big log stretching across the creek from one bank to the other. After a while Hicks remarked:

'William, you know I've always been a pretty good shot, but I might miss. Anybody might do that — a runnin' bear ain't no easy thing to hit in a vital spot. Then suppose he should attack me. I can't run away very fast an' I can't climb a tree very well either with this peg leg. Just to be absolutely safe, I tell you what I'm goin' to do. I'm goin' to crawl out here on this big log an' sit out there over the middle of the



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creek. Then I can kill the bear when he comes up either bank.'

Hicks crawled out on the log over the creek with his long old rifle in his hands, and we waited.

Finally we began to hear a chorus of barks and yelps far off in the forest. After ten or fifteen minutes we heard a crashing sound and a grand chorus by the whole pack of dogs. The bear was coming. It was easy to tell he was coming toward us, too. Hicks examined his rifle and got all ready to shoot the bear through the heart.

The noise of the chase rapidly increased in volume. The speed with which the bear was smashing his way through the underbrush and cane thickets and jungles of vines was wonderful.

Before we realized that we were really to occupy the center of the stage, the biggest black bear I have ever seen, before or since, in or out of captivity, burst through the cane and came out in the open ground on the creek bank, on the opposite side of the creek and about a hundred yards from me. He loped up the bank toward the log on which Hicks was seated.

When the bear reached the end of Hicks's



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log, to our dismay, Mr. Bruin just hopped up on the log and started across! The bear was so excited I don't think he ever saw Hicks, but Hicks saw the bear. Hicks threw both hands in the air and fell off the log, while his rifle fell off on the other side. Hicks and his gun both went out of sight in the water of the creek. The bear crossed the log and ran between the trees seventy-five or a hundred feet from me. I took aim and shot the big old rifle, but the bear kept running.

Hicks swam ashore. Some of the dogs swam the creek, and a lot of them ran across the log on which the bear had crossed and which had been so recently and suddenly vacated by Brother Hicks.

The dogs caught up with the bear before he had gone very far, and from the sounds I heard I was convinced the bear was making a stand. I ran as hard as I could go, being thrown flat several times by vines, and once I fell into a small creek and got my feet wet, but on I went dragging the heavy old rifle with me.

At length I came up to the scene of the battle. The big old bear was standing on his hind legs and had his back to a great fallen log and the dogs were all around him in a circle. A dog on one side would make a rush and as the bear



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turned toward him, another dog would bite the bear on the other side. Mr. Spearhead was the only other hunter present at that time. The bear was very hot and nearly out of breath. His long, fiery red tongue hung out of his mouth and his black hair was spotted with white foam from his mouth and the red of considerable blood. I don't know whether it was the bear's blood or a dog's blood. One of the poor hounds already had a big piece of hide hanging down loose from his shoulder, where the sharp claws of the bear had ripped him open.

The bear had his ears flattened back against his head just like a horse or mule when he is fixing to bite you. If the bear ever landed the full force of one of his paws on a dog, it meant almost certain death.

Mr. Spearhead rushed over to me and said; 'Lend me your rifle — mine's empty.'

'Mine's empty too,' I replied.

In a moment Squire La Farge ran up. He kicked some of the dogs aside and, bringing his heavy rifle very close to the bear, he fired and shot him in the side.

The bear staggered, walked away from Squire La Farge alongside the log about ten feet, and then sank to the ground. The whole pack of dogs was instantly on top of him biting and



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chewing as hard as they could. But poor Mr. Bruin was dead.

Charley and John and all the other hunters came up and each had his experience to tell. Squire La Farge said we had killed the biggest bear in that part of Arkansas. The bear was skinned and the meat cut up into parts and packed home on two horses. Mr. Spearhead went down to the creek and got Hicks and fished out his rifle.

We had a big supper that night at Squire La Farge's, and all the men had a lot of fun out of Hicks for letting the bear make him fall off the log. Hicks claimed he was right in the act of taking aim, and would have blown the bear's head off, when he accidentally slipped off the log.

After supper Squire La Farge went into a back room and came out with a curious iron arrangement in his hand.

'I'm goin' show you, here, gentlemen,' said the Squire, 'how my father used to make his light at nighttime here in Arkansas in the early days. This, I have in my hand, is the very lamp he used. He burned bear oil in it all the time. They did not have any kerosene in those days. This lamp was made by a blacksmith, and it was made to burn bear oil.'

Squire La Farge went into the kitchen and



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melted some bear fat and filled the lamp and brought it back burning a clear blue flame. This bear-oil lamp was made entirely of wrought iron. It was shaped something like a guitar, but was only about eight inches long and one inch deep. There was a sliding iron door which left an opening for the wick. Attached to the lamp by a little iron chain about a foot and a half long was a nice pair of iron tweezers, made to trim the wick. Then there was a chain and hook by which the lamp was hung. The maker of this lamp had ornamented it with an iron heart about two inches in diameter, just to show his skill.

We were to leave early the next morning. When at last we arose to tear ourselves away from our so congenial and thoughtful hosts, Queenie presented the bearskin to Charley. He was the proudest boy you ever saw.

I had been very much interested in the bear-oil lamp and had spent some time examining it minutely. Queenie looked at me, and then at the lamp, and then at her father. He nodded. She unhung the ancient lamp from its big hook on the wall and walked over and gave it to me.

To John she gave a beautiful leather quirt she had made with her own hands. It was



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plaited from different-colored leather and had a piece of iron inside the handle. It made a fine riding-whip. There was a leather loop to go around the wrist so it would not be dropped. Hicks was given a big piece of bear liver and some spare ribs, bear fat to make oil for the lamp, and other parts.

None of us have ever forgotten that bear-hunt.

At daylight the next morning we cast off with much regret and floated down the river. We had fallen in love with La Farge Landing and all its hospitable citizens. For days we ate bear meat — or pretended to eat it.

Charley used up all the salt on the boat curing that big bearskin. When he had it thoroughly salted, he nailed it outside above the runway. We thought it made us look very important stretched up there, amidships, on the starboard side of the Queen.

That tremendous fresh bearskin made the natives' eyes swell with wonder, and, after taking one look at our giant trophy of the chase, they approached us with the greatest politeness and respect.

At night we put out the coal-oil lamp and burned the bear-oil lamp, which contained real bear oil made from real bear fat. We sat around



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in its dim and flickering but romantic light and told one bear story after another, until we actually believed we could kill any bear living.



## CHAPTER XII

### *Colonel Drury's House of Mystery*

WITHIN a few days after leaving Squire La Farge's we reached the State of Louisiana on our right hand. Somehow we expected Louisiana to be quite different from any other State, and we were anxious to see what it looked like and what kind of sport it could afford. So we got in an eddy and let the Queen float up to the bank under a big cypress tree and made fast.

We left the boat in charge of Hicks and Abe and told them we should be back before night. As we departed Abe was sharpening the big axe to cut a supply of stove wood. Out into the great forest of hardwood and pine, in Indian file, we tramped. We took the little axe with us and blazed the trees as we went along, so we should not get lost. Without some such precaution we might have been hopelessly lost in fifteen minutes.

There were plenty of squirrels. We shot at a number and killed a couple of them. Then we suddenly came to a road winding through the trees. We were very much surprised, because this was a wild section. Our curiosity was ex-



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cited by this road, and we agreed to follow it up and see where it would lead us. We knew we could come back by the road, and John cut a tree nearly in two, making a big blaze so we should know where to turn off to get back to *The Ocean Queen*.

We followed the road for perhaps three quarters of a mile, and were astonished when we came to a large clearing full of the very finest corn we had ever seen. We pushed on round the cornfield, and there in a beautiful grove was a house that would have been a credit to any city street.

We were dumbfounded. It was a two-story house with gable windows. There was a large porch in front, with great round columns. There were a number of small outhouses. We stood and gazed and listened. Not a sound was to be heard except the thumping of a woodpecker on a dead limb. We ventured a little nearer, and still no dogs ran out to bark at us. We could not understand this mysterious house with no dogs to guard it.

Anybody who knows the first thing about a boy knows that we just simply had to find out everything about that house. After a whispered consultation we decided that there must be some one in the house; that we would walk



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boldly up to the front door and ask for a drink of water, and then John could put some questions to them.

Up we went to a big, fine front door, which was standing wide open. We knocked and looked as serious as possible, but got no answer. Charley took out his heavy knife and knocked on the doorpost until the sound reverberated in the stillness of the woods, but there was no response. Then I discovered there was actually a front doorbell on the door. I rang this, but no one answered. We held another conference, and all started round to the back door. We knocked and pounded, but only the woodpecker answered.

Charley said he was going in and see what was in that house if he died in the attempt. With Charley in the lead — our gun and knives and axe ready — we cautiously tiptoed up the back steps and entered the open door.

It was the strangest room my eyes had ever rested upon. The floor was covered a foot deep in places with trash and rubbish of all kinds — shavings, wires, leather, etc. There were a great many strange-looking wires and ropes hanging from holes in the ceiling. All these ropes had nice handles of wood, plush, or leather, and came down to the right height for a man to



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reach. The ceiling was all sawed and cross-sawed into many trapdoors of some kind. There was a cooking-stove in one corner. Near the stove was a big box filled with corncobs, and each cob had a long wire stuck in it. Near the corncob department was a large tin can full of kerosene. On the walls hung a rather complete collection of cooking-utensils. The room was so full of objects I could not tell you all it contained.

We were now getting bolder. There was evidently no human being on the premises. We began to joke about the various mysterious arrangements in the room. Charley said he was going to see how the thing worked, and he got up on a chair and caught hold of one of the plush handles. We stood below with our mouths open in suspense.

Charley gave a hard jerk. Well, the result was like seventeen alarms of fire and a couple of earthquakes!

A trapdoor flew open and the air was simply filled with stove wood, which came tumbling down with the worst racket any one ever heard. We shot out of that back door like a varsity football team going over the goal line for a touchdown.

John fell down and tore his pants, and I



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stepped on Charley's hand. We hit the ground running, and did not stop until we were way out in the yard behind the stable.

We looked all round to see if anybody was after us. No; the stillness was the same, and no one appeared on the scene. Charley had the gun when the avalanche of stove wood began to fall and I'll say to his credit that he was still holding on to it. You know it never will do to get so excited that you drop your shooting-irons.

'That's the dog-gonedest contraption I ever saw in my life,' remarked Charley.

'Maybe it's an insane asylum,' said John, as he peeped round the corner.

We looked through the cracks of some of the buildings in the back yard and saw they were also filled with strange and mysterious machinery.

Opening the gun, Charley took the squirrel-shot cartridges out and loaded both barrels with buckshot cartridges. Then we plucked up courage to go back and try it again. Just at the moment we were not hankering for that kitchen, so we politely tiptoed round to the front and went in at the big front door.

Here we found a handsome room, with all the wall space covered with books as high as a



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very tall man could reach. There was a fine carpet on the floor, easy-chairs and everything to suggest comfort and refinement. We passed into what was evidently the dining-room. It was well furnished, but many things in the room were of peculiar design and strange make. The dining-table was round, and we quickly discovered that a panel in the middle of it worked on a pivot and would spin like a top. If you were seated in a chair at one side of the table and desired something on the other side, all you had to do was to give the inner table a spin. There was an outer circle of about eighteen inches that remained stationary.

We went upstairs into two bedrooms. They were in a disorderly condition and it did not look as if a woman had ever made up those beds. The covers were home-made quilts and the sheets were cotton homespun.

We wandered back downstairs. All three of us were in the dining-room spinning the table when we heard the front door shut and heard footsteps. I know my heart was right up in my throat. Charley, still holding the gun, dashed for a closet, which had some green cloth curtains hanging in front of it all the way down to the floor. I followed Charley. John hesitated. The footsteps approached the dining-room and



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I thought John was lost, but he gave a dart for the closet and jumped behind the curtains with us just as the door from the front room opened.

I held my breath, but through the crack in the curtains I could see the man who had just entered. He was more than six feet tall, and had very thick black hair and piercing little black eyes, which twinkled and jumped about. His face was shaven clean, except a mustache of moderate proportions. He wore a homespun shirt, homespun trousers, and very large shoes, which looked home-made too.

John whispered to me: 'I think he's a lunatic.'

I looked at those awful, long, bony hands, and imagined how easily he could choke me to death. My throat began to get dry. I gulped and my knees trembled.

The big man arose from the chair in which he had seated himself and started directly for our closet. I looked at John and Charley. Even in the half-light of the closet I could see that both were as white as a sheet. But he stopped just at one side of the closet and got a towel, or something of the kind, and walked out into the middle of the room and wiped the perspiration off his neck.



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Then he went across the room to a little cabinet and took something out of it. As he faced about, I was simply frozen with terror to see in his hand a great revolver. He must have seen us, and was just taking his time about our execution. Probably he had been watching us all the time as we spun his dining-table.

He sat down and began to work with his big pistol. He was evidently getting it ready. I would have given everything I had in the world to have been out of that house. Oh, how I longed for life! I was so young to die. Why did I ever leave my dear uncle to come down into this terrible country? I thought about how good I would be if I was permitted to live.

Right here I take off my hat to old Charley. I am not going to try to tell you that he was not scared. He was pale, but — bless his soul — he was game, and desperate, too. He whispered to us to stay behind the curtain, and said he was going out to face that man. He cocked both barrels of his gun very carefully, so as not to make a ‘click,’ got all ready, knocked the curtain aside, stepped out, and said:

‘Good-evening.’

The big man arose and looked puzzled. Charley began to talk, and he talked fast, too, and was very polite. Charley introduced him-



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self and explained that he was from Memphis. The big man smiled and said:

‘And you are from Memphis. I know your father very well. Have a seat, Mr. Kerr.’

Charley gave a sly glance at the closet and stammered: ‘I — I — er — you see, Mister, I have a couple of friends with me — er — er — Yes, sir — right there in the closet. You know, sir, we didn’t know any one lived in this house.’

Charley stepped over and uncovered us. We marched forth. The cause of all our fright advanced to meet us with a most kindly smile and an outstretched hand, saying:

‘My name is Drury — Wellington Drury. Have seats, gentlemen.’

My heart began to go back down where it belonged, and the world did look sweet to me. Everything was just about perfect in my estimation the remainder of that day.



## CHAPTER XIII

*John Has a Great Surprise — Colonel Drury Gives us a Beautiful Pet*

WE explained to Colonel Drury, as best we could, how we happened to be in his closet. He seemed to understand us thoroughly and was glad to see us.

‘I have always felt,’ said Colonel Drury, ‘that this section was making a great mistake to raise only corn, cotton, sugar-cane, and rice, and to buy nearly everything we used at a great distance. I contended that the South was capable of supplying the raw material, and also capable of manufacturing everything we needed and used. To demonstrate this theory, I came out here to this wild country and built my home. Nearly everything you see about you is of raw material from this section and has been made on the premises. If you will come with me I’ll show you some of my manufactures and labor-saving devices.’

He took us into the kitchen. ‘You see, gentlemen,’ he said, ‘I have been so unfortunate as to remain all my life without a wife. For that reason I generally attend personally to



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my domestic necessities, and have tried to have things arranged as conveniently as possible.

‘For instance, I have this box full of corn-cobs, with pieces of wire inserted in the pith. When I arise on a cold morning, and wish a fire at once, all I have to do is to grasp one of these wires and dip the cob in this can of coal-oil, reach up here to the match-box, strike a match, and light the kerosene-saturated cob. This makes one of the most efficient and most economical torches I have seen. I place the torch in the stove, dump some kindling and wood on top, and at once have a roaring fire. The cobs cost me nothing and I save the wires to be used over and over again. You will notice these are very large cobs. I am proud of my corn. I was, in fact, ploughing my corn when you gentlemen arrived from Memphis and mistook my home for a deserted house. That was a very natural mistake on account of the total absence from my premises of women, children, and dogs. I never could get any woman to have me, and therefore have no children, and I had to get rid of my dogs because they would kill my sheep. I wished to demonstrate that sheep could be raised here as well as in any other State.

‘Now, gentlemen, I will show you how I pro-



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cure my fuel, when desired. I observe that I already have quite a supply of stove wood — I did not know I had so much in the room — but I will demonstrate for you. In the summer, my negro man, Sambo, cuts the stove wood and by means of a pulley, a rope, and a mule, pulls the wood up to the storage room above, where it is arranged in regular lots on a series of trap-doors. When I pull this rope, the door falls and gives me a supply of wood.'

He pulled, and another cloud of stove wood came thundering down, as we backed off as far as possible.

He then took us into the yard and showed us his steam engine and boiler, which were connected by a system of belts and wheels with all his shops that were located close by. He used pine wood from the adjoining forest to fire the boiler. He had a small sawmill, a turning-lathe, and planer. There was also a small grist mill and a flour mill. He grew his own wheat and made his own flour. There were likewise a blacksmith shop and a shoe and harness shop. In a separate room were an old-fashioned spinning-wheel and all the implements for making homespun cloth from cotton and wool. On the other side of the engine room was a one-stand cotton-gin.



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As we walked back to the house, Colonel Drury again told us he had done business with Charley's father for a number of years. He said he was much pleased and honored to have this visit from us, and invited us to spend the night with him.

We did not like to worry Hicks by our absence, but, as it was getting dark and we thought Hicks could stand it until morning, we accepted the invitation.

Charley brought out our two squirrels and Colonel Drury broiled them both at once in a big home-made wire broiler, and cooked a lot of other supper. We sat down to the round, revolving table, but we did not tell Colonel Drury we knew how to work it. We pretended to be much interested when he 'demonstrated' it for us.

After supper we all went into the big front room where all the books were kept and sat under a swinging lamp and had a most interesting conversation. We found Colonel Drury had delved into nearly all branches of science. He got down some wonderful books, and read to us, and showed us pictures, but he was too deep for us and we were getting sleepy.

He soon took us upstairs and made a bluff at making up the beds, at the same time admit-



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ting that housekeeping was not one of his strong points. He said he would sometimes put dinner on the stove, get to reading a book, and let the dinner burn up. To avoid trouble of this kind he had invented several automatic cooking appliances, which he said he would demonstrate for us in the morning.

It did not take us long to undress, and John was the first in bed. There was a large wooden home-made frame over the bed for the purpose of holding the mosquito bar in proper position. It could be lowered and raised so as to be out of the way in the daytime. There was a rope with one of those plush handles hanging down by the wall, right alongside the bed.

‘You pull this to let down the mosquito bar,’ said John.

‘You better watch out,’ said Charley, who had had experience with ropes with plush handles. ‘You don’t know what that thing will turn loose.’

‘Aw, you can see right there where it is connected with the frame of the bar. I’ll show you how it works,’ said John.

Lying flat on his back in the bed in his night clothes, John gave a hard jerk on the plush handle.

The heavens opened and about seventeen



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buckets of water came down on top of John, nearly drowning him, while the ceiling of the entire room began to sprinkle and squirt streams of water.

I'll never forget how John looked as he came out from under that water-spout. He had his eyes shut, and was gasping for breath. Both arms stuck out at full length, with each finger pointing in a different direction. And there was no let-up to the flood. It just continued to pour down as if the bottom of some lake had dropped out.

Colonel Drury came running upstairs. He stood on a chair, and turned some valve, and the water ceased to flow. Instead of being angry, he seemed really pleased at this 'demonstration' of one of his home-made contraptions.

We three stood there batting our eyes and shivering, while Colonel Drury stood on the chair and explained to us how the system worked. This explanation seemed lost on John, as he already knew how it worked.

'You see, gentlemen,' he said, 'as my residence has not the protection of any city fire apparatus, I was compelled to devise a system of protection myself. There is a large tank on top of the house which Sambo keeps full of water at all times. I have a system of large pipes



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leading from this tank and running into the rooms all over the house. The valves shutting the openings in these pipes are kept closed by ropes, which are fastened down to eyelets. The valves are controlled by springs, so that if a fire starts anywhere in the house, in my absence, as soon as one of these ropes burns in two the valves fly open and the flood descends and extinguishes the conflagration. When you released the rope it flew up, and the valves were opened. This is a demonstration, gentlemen, that the system begins to operate either by fire or by hand.'

No scientific gentleman ever had a wetter audience. After this explanation the Colonel got down off the chair, and smilingly led us across the hall to a dry bedroom, and gave each of us one of his top shirts in lieu of a night-shirt. I think he was secretly pleased at the prompt and efficient response from his fire system. As the house was not plastered, but ceiled with planks, no damage was done.

We got to bed and about then none of us would have pulled another rope in that house for a thousand dollars.

In the morning when we awoke Sambo had breakfast ready. As we appeared in the dining-room Colonel Drury came down the stairs



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dressed in his Sunday clothes. He wore a wine-colored broadcloth suit with a black velvet collar. His trousers seemed to me to be a little too long, but he looked very fine and acted the part of a gentleman, which he was.

‘If you will step into the kitchen for a moment,’ said Colonel Drury, ‘I will demonstrate one of the devices I mentioned last night as saving me trouble when I try to cook and read at the same time. Now, I will ask you gentlemen your preference as to boiled eggs. Do you prefer three-minute eggs, or four-minute eggs, or hard-boiled eggs?’

We all said we preferred three-minute eggs.

‘All right,’ continued the Colonel, ‘you see, I place the eggs in this wire basket, which is attached to this iron rod, fastened on a pivot to work like a see-saw. You observe that the weight of the eggs immediately causes them to descend into this pot of boiling water. On the other end of the see-saw you notice this large tin can. Above the can is this glass funnel (which I got out of a doctor’s office in Vicksburg). I take a cupful of sand out of this box, and pour it into the funnel until it fills to the line marked here, as you see, “three minutes.” That much sand will run out of the funnel in three minutes, and at that exact moment the



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weight of the sand becomes sufficient to make the see-saw tip. The can of sand goes down and the eggs come up out of the water.'

Although we all expressed our admiration for this automatic egg-boiler, I felt in my own mind that I was willing to wager that if Colonel Drury were reading, the eggs would get stone cold. But I said nothing about that.

As we returned to the dining-room, Colonel Drury reached into the cabinet and took out that awful pistol — the same one with which we thought at one time we were to be murdered.

'Here is a firearm upon which I have spent much thought and labor. I am endeavoring to make an automatic pistol which will fire rapidly and with accuracy. It is not yet perfected. In fact, if I am not mistaken, I was working on the pistol when you gentlemen announced your presence.'

The Colonel grinned, and we scraped the floor with our feet and looked at the ceiling, but had nothing to say.

After breakfast Colonel Drury asked us to take a little walk with him, saying he had something he wished to show us.

We went about a quarter of a mile from the house, and came to a clearing, which was fenced. We climbed up on the fence and there



## John Has a Great Surprise

was the prettiest herd of goats we had ever seen.

‘I wished to demonstrate,’ said the Colonel, ‘that goats would thrive in this section. I secured six pairs of the best goats I could find, and have raised all you see here at almost no expense, except this fence.’

There were several hundred goats. We climbed over and got down among them. The Colonel leaned over the fence, and, looking at us with smiling eyes, said:

‘I understand ships often carry a goat as a mascot. If you would like a mascot for The Ocean Queen, pick out any goat you like and he is yours.’

We were at once charmed with the idea and began to select our goat. Strange to say, we did not pick out a billygoat, but chose a beautiful little nannygoat, that was very gentle. Her bleat was positively human. She would eat out of our hands. She had a large bag and was giving milk. The Colonel opened a gate and let out the little goat. Charley produced a cord from his pocket, and we tied it round her neck and led her back to the house.

Colonel Drury went into the harness shop, and soon manufactured a little leather collar for Miss Nanny. He attached a long, limber



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piece of leather to the collar, and on the end of that the Colonel actually put a plush handle. You should have seen us look at each other as the Colonel adjusted his spectacles and fastened on this plush handle. I think putting on plush handles was one of his favorite amusements.

After thanking him many times for the goat and the fine entertainment he had given us, and after inviting him to come to see us, we gathered up our gun and axe and nannygoat and bade the genial Colonel a reluctant farewell.

Hicks took a great fancy to the little goat, with her white, silken hair. We named her Nanny Drury. He said we should put a little rope railing about a foot and a half high round the roof of the cabin, and let Miss Nanny stay up there when we were on the river. This idea was accepted at once. We had a big coil of small sea-grass rope, about the size of a clothes-line, but much stronger. We screwed on some small hickory uprights along the top of the cabin at intervals of about six feet and wrapped six strands of rope round the entire cabin. We fastened the line to the uprights with some small staples we had on board. Miss Nanny was turned loose up there, and she seemed to like it.



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She began to eat grass which John was throwing to her. Wag barked at her every time he saw her for two or three days, but finally accepted her as a member of our family.

This upper deck idea quickly became so popular with us that we rigged up a nice canvas awning, strung between our two masts, and arranged canvas curtains hanging down from either side. The curtains could be held out by small poles resting against cleats on the deck. This made a fine, cool place where we could get all the breeze and always remain in the shade, and see everything in any direction.

As the sun was rising over the Mississippi shore the next morning, we paddled out into the big river. We floated on down; the roof garden was grand; we could not imagine why we had not put up these awnings before. We had a canvas chair and two canvas camp stools up there. We leaned back and propped up our feet, and ate cold barbecued mutton which Colonel Drury had given us, wondering how any one could be foolish enough to live on land all the time.



## CHAPTER XIV

### *We Entertain Mrs. Milton Mistletoe and Family*

ABOUT dusk one evening, a couple of days after leaving Colonel Drury's, we were skimming along in the main current, not a hundred feet from the Mississippi bank, with our flags flying. John and Charley and I were all on the roof garden. Charley and I were writing letters and John was playing his French harp. On the lower deck Abe Polk was picking his guitar and singing a mournful song with many repetitions, which ran something like this:

Many man been murdered by de railroad —  
By de railroad — by de railroad —  
Many man been murdered by de railroad —  
Right at his own front do'.

Nanny Drury was bleating, Romeo was patiently searching Wag to see if he could find a single flea, and Hicks was cooking supper.

Suddenly we saw a lady with two girls and a couple of small boys standing on the bank. They looked at us and laughed.

'Isn't that a swell shantyboat?' said one of the boys.



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Then the lady flourished her parasol at us and called out:

‘Did you see anything of a steamboat up the river? We want to go down the river, and we have been waiting so-o-o long.’

‘No, mam,’ I called back. ‘We have not seen a boat since this morning.’

Charley’s quick mind took a couple of turns, and he said to me:

‘Let’s land and give them a ride.’

‘All right,’ I said, ‘jump down on the deck and help put inshore. Say, Abe, step lively there on that sweep. We are going to land.’

As we were so close to the shore we quickly put the boat over to the bank. John jumped out with a line and took a turn round a sapling. I stepped ashore and walked back to the waiting travelers. I introduced myself and explained that we were on a business trip on our boat, The Ocean Queen, and would be delighted to take the lady and party down the river as far as they cared to go.

‘We wish to go only twenty miles. Don’t you reckon it would sink?’

‘Oh, mamma, come on — come on! Look at the monkey! — and just look at that pretty little goat! That boat could carry an elephant, mamma. We won’t ever get home, sitting here



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waiting for that old steamboat. What you afraid of, mamma? It's flat bottom. It can't turn over.' These remarks, and some others of like tenor and effect, were launched by the two boys, some in chorus and some individually.

'Does it leak?' asked the lady.

'Not a drop,' I answered. 'Come aboard and take a look at her.'

Pulled along by the two small boys, and followed by the girls, the lady cautiously started down the bank.

Charley was on the forward deck to help them aboard.

'I am Mrs. Milton Mistletoe,' she said to Charley. 'This is my daughter, Mildred, and this is Lucy, and my two sons, Thomas and William.'

Charley introduced himself, and then introduced John. It did not take a detective to see that the Mistletoes were nice people. They were well dressed and had very pleasing manners. They all went into the cabin. John cast off the line and we were again adrift.

We lighted the big swinging lamp, and our guests were much pleased with our vessel. I mounted to the roof garden by the ladder we had fixed on the cabin wall, and was soon



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followed by the two small boys and later by Charley and John and the two young ladies.

Now that we had so many people aboard, I thought we should take every precaution. I saw that the green and red side lights and the masthead light were burning brightly, and told Abe to work out into the main current. When we were well in the middle of the river, Hicks announced supper for all hands.

It was a very merry party that gathered in the cabin. Our little table was not big enough for all, but that did not matter, for Mrs. Mistletoe quickly set the fashion of what she called a 'lap supper.' I stood watch on the upper deck.

After supper a big full moon began to rise and send a silvery path across the water. John and Charley came up under the awning with Miss Mildred and Miss Lucy.

I began to feel my importance. I was now playing the rôle of 'captain,' as Charley had played the rôle of 'owner' and John had played the part of 'doctor' in selling chill tonic.

I paced back and forth across the deck and kept my eye on the government lights marking the current.

We had a real 'lead line' for measuring the depth of the water. It was a rope with a long



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narrow lead at one end. Pieces of red flannel were tied to the rope at intervals to designate the different measurements. I well knew the water under our boat was a hundred feet deep, but just to add a little style to this marine party, I walked up to John with an assumed but very important and official bearing and said in a low but positive tone:

‘Mr. Guheen, will you please have the man on watch cast the lead.’

John well understood my make-believe authority, and at once entered into the game.

He asked his companion to excuse him for this call of duty and sprang forward. Leaning over the roof-garden rail, he called out in clear, distinct tones:

‘Look lively there below! Man on watch — cast the lead.’

Hicks may have had his weak points, but he had served on the river in a good many jobs and he knew how to cast the lead. In fact, he was an artist at this particular task. And what was still more pleasing to us, he understood the make-believe world of those who have not yet put one foot in the grave. He came forward with the lead, and as all the guests watched with intent interest, he let the lead down gently, measuring the distance to the



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water. Then he pulled it up, gave the lead a whirl and threw it far ahead of us into the river and let it go down.

‘Quarter — less — twain,’ he called a moment later in a long-drawn-out, mournful, and sing-song voice, which is accepted as the proper thing on the Mississippi River for a man casting the lead.

John, standing forward on the hurricane deck, very erect and important, repeated the call to me. I was pacing the deck over the stern.

I knew Hicks was an awful liar. That report of ‘quarter — less — twain’ meant that he had found only ten and a half feet of water in mid-channel. But all three of us were trying to please the ladies, so I continued to pace the deck, glanced at the government lights over my shoulder and said nothing.

‘Mark — t-w-a-i-n,’ came the next one, and was repeated by John in official tones, as before.

‘Twelve feet,’ thought I; the water begins to deepen.

‘Quarter twain’ — John repeated, ‘Quarter twain.’

‘Half twain’ — repeated, ‘Half twain.’

‘Quarter less three’ — repeated, ‘Quarter less three.’



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‘By the mark three’ — repeated, ‘By the mark three.’

‘Quarter four’ — repeated, ‘Quarter four.’ Hicks’s lead was going down a gradually sloping bank according to his reports. ‘Quarter four,’ had put us in nineteen and one half feet of water.

‘Half four’ — repeated, ‘Half four.’

‘Quarter less four’ — repeated, ‘Quarter less four.’

‘By the mark four’ — repeated, ‘By the mark four.’

‘No bottom’ — repeated, ‘No bottom.’

I then indicated to them that they might desist sounding. All the ladies seemed very much relieved since Hicks had reported ‘No bottom.’

As Hicks wound up his lead line after this performance, he confided to the passengers nearest to him that on the Cumberland River it was customary to do the sounding with a cornstalk, and the calls were ‘one joint,’ ‘two joints,’ ‘three joints,’ and ‘no bottom.’

The moonlight was now very bright. All the young people were on the roof garden singing popular songs, and now and then a hymn, accompanied by the harp and guitar. John and Charley were accomplished musicians with



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their own instruments, and it was certainly delightful as the clear young voices and the music of the harp and guitar floated out over the broad rushing waters.

The two small boys were having a fine time playing with Wag, Romeo, and the nannygoat.

The evening passed quickly and Mrs. Mistletoe said she was glad she had come. It was nearly eleven o'clock when we sighted the lights of the little town at which our guests lived.

We made a landing in fine style and tied up tight to the bank near the regular steamboat wharf. As our friends departed, Mrs. Mistletoe gave us her card and asked us to come to see them the next day, which we promised to do. John and I were somewhat smitten by the charms of the two young Mississippi girls.



## CHAPTER XV

### *Captured by the Moonshiners*

THE next morning we slept late and rested. As we were eating breakfast, John came into the cabin with a tin cup in his hand. He picked up the coffee-pot and poured out a cup of coffee. Then he poured something from his tin cup into the coffee.

‘What’s that you have in the cup?’ asked Hicks.

‘It’s milk,’ answered John.

‘Where did you get it?’

‘For what do we keep a cow? Sure, I milked the nannygoat,’ answered John.

After that we had goat’s milk whenever we wanted it.

That afternoon we dressed in the best we had, and about four o’clock went up into the town, and inquired the way to Mrs. Mistletoe’s.

We found the house a couple of blocks from the business part of town. It was a one-story house, but was eight or ten feet off the ground. The front yard was a mass of roses and other flowers. We spent a pleasant hour or two with



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the ladies and then were invited into the dining-room.

After supper we went out on the porch and were introduced to Mr. Archibald, Mrs. Mistletoe's brother. He asked us a number of questions about *The Ocean Queen*, and after a while he motioned to John, Charley, and me to come out into the yard with him. He took us out behind a big rosebush, and, speaking in a low voice, said:

'Would you young gentlemen like to go after some real game — go on a real hunt — A MAN-HUNT?'

Our eyes began to swell out as we all exclaimed:

'A man-hunt?'

'Yes,' he replied. 'I am Sheriff of this county and it has occurred to me that perhaps you can help me. A gang of moonshiners have been operating a whiskey boat on the river near here for a long time. We have tried time and again to capture them, but they stay on their shantyboat in the river most of the time and it is difficult to approach them without arousing suspicion. If they are in a close place and have whiskey on board, they can drop it into the river and escape detection. The idea has come to me that if you have no objection



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we could put five or six officers in your boat and float down on them. They would not think of another shantyboat as bringing officers of the law. They peddle out their moonshine whiskey to negroes and the lowest class of white people, causing much drunkenness and crime.

‘This illicit whiskey is made up in the hill country — the piney woods — back of the delta and brought down here to these men, who distribute it all up and down the front of our county. Every decent white man in this county is willing to help rid our community of these criminals, and if you boys will give us the aid of your boat, every citizen will certainly appreciate it.’

We at once agreed to the proposition and Mr. Archibald told us to get our hats and walk downtown with him.

He took us to his office in the Court-House, which stood in the center of a large square. He lit a lamp and went out, telling us he would be back in a few minutes. When he returned he had five men with him, whom he introduced to us, and we shook hands all round and began to feel that we were about to become a part of the machinery of the law. Two of the men were United States marshals who had



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come there a day or two before for the special purpose of arresting the whiskey-boat moonshiners. The other three men were deputy sheriffs.

All the officers talked in a very low tone, and every little while one of them would get up and go outside to see that no one was eavesdropping.

Mr. Archibald talked at length and explained to the marshals that he had made numerous attempts to arrest the men on this whiskey boat, but that they were a slippery and desperate lot and had always managed to escape him in one way or another. He explained his idea of getting all the officers in *The Ocean Queen* and dropping down on them. The United States marshals said they thought that was a good idea, as the moonshiners could probably be taken entirely by surprise.

‘It would be best,’ said one of the marshals, ‘to let one of these boys stand on the forward deck as we approach them. As soon as the boats touch, let the lad immediately go into the cabin of the whiskey boat. If he remains inside, we will know the law-breakers are there. If he finds no men in the cabin, let him come out on deck at once.’

‘Here’s another point,’ said Mr. Archibald.



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‘The whiskey boat is constantly lashed to a motor boat. If they should have their suspicions aroused, they would simply run off and leave us. For that reason I think it would be best to get young Gaines with his motor boat, lash his boat on the side away from the bank, and let her float down with us. They could not see the motor boat behind the cabin of the shantyboat these young gentlemen have so kindly donated to help uphold the law. Gaines’s boat is very fast and if they try to run away we can catch them.’

The relative advantages of a daylight approach, or night attack, were gone over, and it was decided best to drop down in broad daylight, as the men were more liable to be on the boat in the daytime. At night they often made trips to the interior to get the moonshine whiskey. It was agreed we should start at two o’clock the next afternoon.

The next day we all went to Mrs. Mistletoe’s and thanked her for entertaining us so nicely and told every one we were leaving after dinner for Vicksburg. On Mr. Archibald’s advice we secretly left Abe in the town to await our return. Mr. Archibald said he would have him well taken care of.

One by one the deputies and marshals came



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aboard, until we were all assembled. The marshals had small short rifles, which carried a big enough bullet, however, and which were very powerful. Gaines was there and had his motor boat ready. The whiskey boat was known to be down the river about ten miles.

Before we got away, Abe slipped down to the Queen and motioned to Charley to come out on the bank. Abe told Charley that he had just been talking to a negro fisherman who had had some trouble with a shantyboat man a few nights before, when the shantyboat had run foul of some of his catfish floats and trot lines. Abe said the shantyboat man threatened to kill the fisherman, and Abe gave it as his belief that the owner of the shantyboat was none other than Hamon. According to Abe, the fisherman gave a very good description of Hamon and Ginnie. Charley came back and reported the conversation to me and John, but we were now launched on the man-hunt, and our plans could not be changed.

We cast off with the power boat lashed to the Queen's side, but her engine was silent. We did not wish to attract attention by going away from the landing in any other guise than that of a shantyboat. After we were some distance from the town, Gaines got orders to go



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full speed ahead and The Ocean Queen went down the river at a great rate, throwing up a nice bow wave.

We knew this was real serious business, but we were out after adventure. I began to think we were in a good way of getting what we were after.

It did not take very long to cover the ten miles down the river, and before we realized it we were in sight of the celebrated whiskey boat. The engine was stopped and we floated quietly down. Hicks, who was a genuine shantyboat man, had orders to work the sweep. Our shanty hit the bank very close to the boat that distributed the 'mountain dew.'

I was told to go into the cabin of the other boat as quickly as possible, and if I found any men to stay there, and ask how much they charged for a quart of good corn liquor.

As we approached, there was no one in sight on the whiskey boat except one woman. As soon as we touched the bank, I stepped off and walked up the gangplank of the other boat and into the cabin door. The only persons in the cabin were two women.

'How much do you charge for a quart of good corn liquor?' I asked.

Both women looked at me and then at each



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other. They were suspicious. They did not think I looked like one of their regular customers.

‘We ain’t got no liquor,’ said one, and I walked out the door on deck to show the officers that the men were not at home.

As the officers came aboard, I could see the women’s eyes flashing and I felt certain they knew officers of the law were after them. Both women were barefooted. Their dresses were dirty and greasy and the corners of their mouths were stained with snuff.

Mr. Archibald made a sign to his men and they began to search the boat. I could see the women were under tense excitement.

A great many dirty things and a lot of jugs and bottles were hauled out, but they found no liquor. They pulled up the floor, but found only bilge water — which was very ill-smelling. They had about given up the search when one of the United States marshals sitting on the bank remarked:

‘That’s an extra tall shantyboat. She’s two feet higher in the cabin than *The Ocean Queen*.’

He thought a moment and an idea seemed to strike his mind. He smiled, arose, and went back on board the suspected boat. He entered the cabin and began to examine the ceiling. It



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was not long before he let down a trapdoor. The boat had a false ceiling and over it was a loft full of jugs and bottles of corn liquor. The whiskey was almost as clear as water, except that it had a yellowish tinge.

The officers were jubilant and began to unload the loft of the whiskey boat.

About that time I noticed John step up to Mr. Archibald and whisper something in his ear. He looked all around and then said to the defiant woman standing on the bow with her hands on her hips:

‘Where is the other woman?’

‘Ye got sich a good nose fer findin’ things, mabbe ye kin fine her yerself. Ye ain’t got no business comin’ round here rippin’ up people’s boats what’s tryin’ to make a honest livin’.’

Then she reached in the pocket of her dress and pulled out a round, very shiny little tin can. She removed the top, caught her lower lip between her fingers, and pulled it out as far as possible. With the other hand she emptied about a teaspoonful of snuff from the shiny can into her under lip and shut her mouth. She then made an amber addition to the Mississippi, put her snuff brush in one corner of her mouth, and on the whole seemed somewhat



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relieved now that she had had her 'say' and taken a 'dip.'

Mr. Archibald called us all together out on the bank and said: 'That woman slipped away from here as we were taking the liquor out of the loft. She has probably lit out for their rendezvous in the woods about five miles up the creek for the purpose of notifying the men of our presence. I believe three of us had best start right away and overtake her. The other three men can stay here and guard the whiskey and the boat, and see that this other virago doesn't get away. When we come back with the woman, we can lay an ambush and capture all the moonshiners before they know anything has happened.'

This was agreed to, but with some misgivings on the part of some of the party. They had to act quickly. There was no time to argue the matter. Mr. Archibald and one of his deputies and one of the United States marshals started out in pursuit of the missing woman.

We all went back on the whiskey boat and made a further examination of the liquor. The snuff-dipping female was sitting on the forward deck telling Hicks what she thought of him. She knew he was a genuine shanty-



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boat man, and she thought he had betrayed them.

‘Ain’t you a nice one,’ she said as she looked Hicks squarely in the eyes with threatening mien and gesture, ‘you pie-faced baboon? You call yerself a river man, but ye ain’t got no right to that name — ye air a hound dog fer the revenueurs — that’s what ye air. Ye low-down scum of the earth — take yer last look at that sun, fer ye’ll never see that sun set.’

Hicks grinned a sickly grin, and got a little redder in some places and a little whiter in others. That talk didn’t sound very well to me either. I began to wish I was in Vicksburg, or at home, or anywhere but in that whiskey boat.

She kept on vilifying Hicks for about twenty or thirty minutes. Then she seemed to see a bird in the air, or something. She did see something on the bank. I followed her glance, but could not see a thing but the natural forest. She bowed her head a few moments in evident thought. She then arose and addressed the officers:

‘You-all thought you was so smart to unkiver them jugs in the loft, now just come into the cabin, gintlemen, if you please, and I’m a-goin’ to show you that you ain’t no



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good at all when it comes to sarchin' fer licker. I'm a-goin' to show you some lickin'.'

Led on by this interesting proposition on the part of the mistress of the whiskey boat, every soul of us went into the cabin and crowded around the woman as she got down on her hands and knees and began to pull at the planks in the floor. Then suddenly we heard some one call out:

**'THROW UP YOUR HANDS!'**

There were eight or ten rifles and pistols leveled on us. By the clever aid of the woman the moonshiners had the 'drop' on us. She had seen them make a signal from the woods, and had deliberately led us into the cabin so we would not observe the approach of her men.

The officers were quickly disarmed. Then, as some of the law-breakers still held their rifles on us, others took plough lines and tied the officers' hands behind their backs and tied them all together. The moonshiners then got some more plough lines and were getting ready to tie up the balance of us when I saw John give a very careful wink at me and Charley. John quietly stepped out on deck and we followed him. In the confusion John had told young Gaines to slip out and get his engine ready.



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John made a wild leap for the bank and lit in the mud nearly knee-deep. We both followed him, and rushed up the plank and were on board *The Ocean Queen* before the moonshiners knew what we were doing. Charley grabbed an axe and cut the line holding us to the shore. Gaines started his engine, and away we went down the river. The moonshiners rushed out on deck and fired a fusillade at us, but we were expecting this and were all lying flat on the floor. No one was hurt and as the firing ceased I was surprised to see old Hicks roll from under one of the beds. He had slipped out with Gaines and hidden himself on the *Queen* early in the trouble.

We looked back and saw some of the gang in hot pursuit of us. They were coming down in their motor boat.

There was only one thing for us to do. If we were to escape we should have to abandon *The Ocean Queen* and pile into the power boat with Gaines. This we did immediately and cast our beloved craft adrift. Wag jumped into the motor boat with us and I did not have the heart to make him go back.

As we rushed forward in Gaines's powerful boat, I looked back at *The Ocean Queen*. There on the roof garden, under the awning, stood



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little Nanny Drury, bleating in most piteous tones. She knew she was being deserted and the sound of her voice did not make me feel very well, either. Romeo was swinging by his tail on his rope ladder and screeching in a very high key.

Gaines was leaving our pursuers as if they were dragging a couple of anchors. We felt very much better and had begun to congratulate ourselves in open conversation, when our loud-mouthed engine gave a couple of extra loud explosions, missed a stroke or two, popped two or three times in a last dying effort — and stopped dead!

‘Good-night!’ said John. ‘We are strictly up against it. Put on a bold front, everybody. We are going to catch the dickens.’

Gaines made frantic efforts to start his engine, but not a sound could be got out of it. You remember what I said at the beginning of this story about some gasoline engines running only when they take a notion.

Not one of us in our boat had any kind of a firearm, so there was nothing to do but to sit still and see what would happen next.

The other boat, containing six men, bore swiftly down upon us. As she came up alongside I thought I could feel the icy hand of



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Death touch me on the shoulder! Hamon was sitting in the bow!

I looked at John and Charley. Their faces were a study. I shall never forget that moment. Hamon looked us over with a venomous leer, but with considerable satisfaction.

The man who seemed to be the leader was a tall, raw-boned, dark-faced fellow, wearing a wide-brimmed black felt hat and a homespun shirt.

‘You-uns calcerlated you-uns would fetch the revenueurs down on us and then run away. Well, you-uns is got just one more guess comin’ this time. We-uns is a-goin’ to tend to you-uns’ case and don’t you-uns never fergit hit.’

‘Me an’ you got to play a little game er cyards,’ said Hamon to the leader, ‘to find out which one of us is a-goin’ to have the pleasure of cuttin’ they throats. They wuz beholden to me afore they ever done you dirt.’

The moonshiners held the two boats together and three of them climbed over into our boat and searched us and the boat for firearms.

‘Lige,’ said the leader in a slow drawl, ‘you-uns better stay in that thar boat and take these young snakes-in-the-grass and this here vermin’ (pointing to Hicks — who visibly shuddered) ‘down to the creek and go on up to



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your house and take plenty of rope and tie 'em up tight. Now don't fail to tie 'em tight — and put 'em in the loft of your house and you-uns stand guard over 'em with your guns. We-uns don't want nairy one of 'em to 'scape, and, Lige, I'm a-tellin' you right now, I hold you personally 'sponsible for these spies, and ef you-uns lets airy one of 'em git away I'm a-goin' to kill you ef hit's the last thing I ever do.

'We-uns is a-goin' back up the river so as to be ready to give a proper and fittin' reception to them yuther three revenuers when they comes back.'

Gaines's contrary engine now began to work all right.

Hamon crawled over into our boat! As he did so, Wag made a vicious attack on him and fastened his teeth in his trousers or his leg, I don't know which. Hamon stood up and deliberately kicked Wag heels over head into the river. Wag began to swim and for a few moments turned back toward the boat, but he saw it was useless, so that brave little dog turned his face toward the far-away Mississippi shore and struck out in earnest. He was still swimming as far as we could see him.

The leader of the whiskey men cast off and



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his boat turned round and started back up the river to his shantyboat at the landing from which we had made our escape.

I thought I was 'scared' in Colonel Drury's closet, but that was not to be compared to our present terrible situation.

The Ocean Queen was floating on down the river and we besought Lige to catch her and take her along. We told him she was a fine boat, and had a nannygoat and a monkey and a parrot on it, and that we didn't mean any harm, and would rather for him to have The Ocean Queen than for her to float down the river alone.

'I don't b'lieve nothin' you-uns says,' responded Lige. 'You-uns ain't nothin' but a pack er liars every time you-uns opens your mouth. Howsomever, I reckon I'll take that boat, as we-uns might use hit in our business as soon we-uns gits shed of you-uns and the revenuers.'

Lige came up to The Ocean Queen and made Gaines's motor boat fast to the side. Lige would not let us board the Queen, but forced us all to keep our seats in the motor boat just as we were.

Hamon did not talk much. He just sat there and snapped his jaws and bored into us



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with his penetrating eyes and whetted his big knife, first on the side of the boat and then on his boot leg. I know this pantomime was more ominous to us than any words he could have spoken.

Lige now proceeded down the river at full speed. We had heard the leader tell Lige to take us to his house and tie us tight, but beyond that we did not know what fate awaited us. These outlaws who now held us captive were not natives of the delta or lowlands adjoining the river. They had come from the land of pine and cedars in the hills of northern Mississippi and parts of Alabama and Tennessee. They manufactured this moonshine whiskey in their mountain homes, without paying the United States taxes. The shantyboat was simply a means of distributing their goods. They all drank whiskey and when intoxicated were demons of the lowest type. They would not stop at anything.

We went down the river about five miles and then turned up a small creek which wound about in the wild and dense forest. Not a house or human being was to be seen. Very little talking was done. We were all too busy thinking.

I wondered whether they would give us anything to eat and whether they would tie



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our hands behind our backs or let them remain in front of our bodies. I dreaded to have my hands tied behind my back. I was afraid I should get nervous and go into a tantrum. I also thought about air to breathe. If they would only give us plenty of fresh air to breathe, I thought I could make up my mind to stand almost anything. I had a horror of being locked in some dark and airtight closet. I knew I should feel as if I were shut up in a box. I wondered if Lige would murder poor innocent little Nanny Drury, and I wondered if our faithful Wag, who was the only one among us who had the nerve to attack Hamon, had ever reached the Mississippi shore, and if he had, what he would do when he got on land. I wondered what means Hamon and Lige would use to kill John, Charley, old Hicks, and me, and how soon they would do it.

When I considered that as long as we lived we should always be dangerous witnesses against them, that our story would put them in the Federal penitentiary for a term of years, I could just naturally see our funeral taking place in Memphis. To my mind it was a very large funeral — we were all being buried at the same time — even old Hicks was there. He had been with us in life and there he was in death in a



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fine coffin with silver handles, looking quite genteel. When he was in his coffin, you could not tell he was a wooden-legged man. That was one advantage. I thought there were a lot of flowers and nearly every one was crying, and —

‘Here’s whar we-uns is a-goin’ to land, and any one of you-uns as don’t do jist as I tell you-uns to do is a-goin’ to git a ball right thu’ the head — and I ain’t a-goin’ to warn nobody twict,’ announced Lige.

And I thought if I ever got home I was ‘a-goin’ to stay there all my life — even if I lived to be a hundred and twenty-five years old, and I was going to Sunday School every Sunday and just sit at home and read good books and my Bible.

‘All of you-uns jist keep your seats and don’t move nairy bit. George, jump out and run over thar to the stable and git them plough lines,’ commanded Lige.

The boats grounded, George got out, and we waited.

Presently George came back with two or three sets of round cotton ropes that were used as plough lines, but which were now to be used for another purpose. Lige held his big old repeating rifle on us, while George untangled the ropes, and the other moonshiner



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took a line ashore and made it fast to a tree.

'Tie 'em round the neck,' said Lige. 'They done run off once ter-day an' the Cap say he wuz a-goin' to kill me if airy one gits away. An' he don't never fail to do what he promises. I wisht I was shed er the whole pack of 'em right now.'

George walked up to Charley with the rope and started to put it around his neck.

'Say, jiminy criminy, can't you tie a fellow by the hands?' exclaimed Charley, as he pulled back.

'You-uns is a-goin' to cause me to burn some powder. I see that right now,' said Lige. 'But ef I starts once I'm a-goin' to clean out the whole bunch, so the Cap won't have nothin' ag'in' me.'

George put the rope around Charley's neck and drew it tight.

'Say, you're choking me to death,' yelled Charley.

'Good fer ye,' answered Lige. 'What better do you-uns expect when you-uns go round settin' revenueurs on poor people like us?'

Charley made a lot of queer noises with his throat as if he were choking, but I don't think the rope was very tight. George proceeded to tie us all by the neck in the



## Captured by the Moonshiners

same manner, putting Hicks on the tail end.

When we were all secure, Hamon walked down the line and said:

‘It ain’t a-goin’ to be long now tell you-all will wish you never heard of Zeke Hamon and stuck your nose in his business.’

When Hamon reached the end of the string and faced Hicks, the train-robber’s eyes seemed to flash fire, and evidently a storm of uncontrollable fury whirled about in his brain.

‘You low-down, two-faced informer!’ burst from Hamon’s lips, and then, before you could crook your finger, Hamon soaked Hicks a powerful blow right in the eye. It sounded like a bat striking a ball a solid lick when somebody is knocking a home run.

Hicks fell over backwards, and, as I was tied next to him, he nearly choked me by putting all his weight on the line. Hicks grabbed his eye in both hands and began to yell that he never informed on anybody in his life. If there had not been so many witnesses present, I think Hamon would have killed Hicks right there and then.

Lige walked over and pulled Hicks up on his foot and his peg leg, and then stood out to one side with his rifle and commanded us to march forward.



## CHAPTER XVI

### *We Face Death*

IN single file, with our necks held tight by the plough lines, we trudged up a path for a couple of hundred yards, when we came to a small and dilapidated log house.

Into this we went and were forced up a narrow and steep set of little steps into the upper floor, or attic. Lige and his two assistants came up with us. Lige looked us over and did not seem to be satisfied with the neck arrangement.

He made one of his men go downstairs and bring back five hickory poles each as big around as a man's wrist and about six feet long.

Lige then began to untie us and cut up the plough lines in lengths to suit him. As Charley was on the end of the string, he was the first to be untied and also the first to be tied up again. Lige put one of the poles behind Charley's back and passed Charley's arms behind and underneath the pole, and then brought his hands around in front and tied them securely together.

He repeated this process with each of the five of us. I thought this was a little better



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than having my hands tied behind my back, but not much better. However, it gave us the advantage of being separate units and we could walk about as we pleased.

Lige had us lined up against the log wall when his job of tying us was completed. He looked at us scornfully. He had a very large and sharp pocket knife with which he had been cutting the rope. He ran the edge of the blade carefully through his mouth and then stood on one foot and whetted the blade on his shoe. After going through this process several times, he felt the edge with his finger and seemed to be satisfied that it was as keen as a razor.

‘Shorty,’ said Lige, speaking to one of his helpers, ‘go downstairs in the stove room en git me a pan, I’m a-goin’ to clip their years so’s I’ll know ’em ag’in the next time they bring the revenuers.’

Shorty started down the steps.

‘Never mind, Shorty, I’ve done changed my mind. I wuz thinkin’ ’bout ketchin’ they years in a pan an’ feedin’ ’em to the hogs, but I reckon ’twould make the hogs sick. I’ll give you the years an’ let you throw ’em in the river fer the catfish — that’s all they fittin’ fer — an’ I pity the man that wuz to eat the catfish.’



## The Adventures of William Tucker

Lige wiped his knife on his pants leg and started toward Hicks, who now had a black eye.

‘Say, Mr. Lige, you wouldn’t do a poor cripple that way? I was forced into this thing. I couldn’t help myself,’ pleaded Hicks in piteous tones.

Lige turned and made a grab at John’s ear. John pulled back and dashed across the room and fell down. Of course with his hands tied and his elbows behind the stick, he ploughed across the floor with his face. This seemed to furnish much amusement to our tormentors, who laughed hilariously.

‘Come on, Shorty,’ said Lige, ‘we-uns is a-goin’ down to the stove room an’ cook some supper. Ef airy one of you-uns moves hand er foot out of this room, er makes any noise, er comes untied, I’ll kill you on sight. As fer as you-uns gittin’ anything to eat, you-uns kin take hit out in smellin’. You-uns ain’t a-goin’ to be alive long enough to need nothin’ to eat nohow.’

With this cheerful news they tramped downstairs and left us in our agony, with nothing to do but to think.

It was growing dark by this time, and I looked out the little window over me and saw



## We Face Death

a star. To think that this same star was shining down on my own dear uncle. He might be looking at this very star this minute and wondering if I were well and happy.

We did smell bacon frying and it smelled wonderfully good to us, but we had no idea of getting any. We were much surprised a few minutes later when Shorty came up the steps with a plate full of home-cured bacon and a big pone of corn bread on the side.

'I don't know how you-uns is a-goin' to eat hit, lessen you-uns jist come up here an' play like you-uns wuz hosses an' eat outen the trough,' said Shorty. He put the plate on a box which stood in one corner of the room and went downstairs again.

Then we all entered into a discussion as to whether or not it was best to eat the bread and bacon. It might be poisoned, we thought. That might be just an easy way of getting rid of us.

My hunger may have made me a prejudiced witness, but I was against the poison theory. I knew these mountain people, though brave, had their faults. They would distil liquor in gross violation of the law, and they would drink this liquor and get drunk and quarrel, fight and kill each other, but as far as I ever



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heard they never spent much time trying to poison anybody. They might meet you in the public road, or on the Court-house Square, or at a picnic, or even at church, pull a gun and shoot you dead, but they did not poison anybody. At least, that was my line of talk, whispered to the others with our heads all close together.

To back my words with actions, I leaned over the bacon dish 'like a horse' and got a piece of bacon in my mouth. My nose got into the grease, but the bacon was fine.

I did not seem to have any fits on account of eating the bacon and soon the other 'horses' were pushing each other around, trying to get the bacon. Charley told me to back up to him so that he could get his hand on my pole and he would pull it from under my arms and said we could stick it back if we heard Lige coming upstairs.

We put this plan into execution. It was a great relief to have my arms free of the pole. We decided that it would be best to take out only one pole at a time. If we took all the poles out and Lige or Hamon should suddenly come upstairs, we should never get them all back in time and they had promised to kill us 'ef we come untied.'



## We Face Death

We arranged our turns to have our poles pulled out, and we all felt a little better now that we had had something to eat and a chance to stretch once in a while. As each man was unpoled, he would go over to the dish full of bacon gravy and sop a piece of corn bread in it and eat it with great satisfaction. All those who were wearing poles stood around and watched the unpoled one very carefully to see that he did not eat too much.

After supper some of the moonshiners had gone down to the Queen and brought up Nanny Drury. They tied her behind the house just under our window. She knew something was wrong and kept bleating all the time.

We suddenly heard footsteps on the stairs. John had his pole out. Such frantic efforts as we had to make to get it back! We were all wearing poles ourselves and were not very quick in our handicapped condition. We got the pole in all right and stood in line just as we had been left.

Lige came up and seemed pleased that we were all still standing so nicely in line. He made us a little speech and announced that we were guarded by three men who would take turns all night. He warned us not to make any attempt to escape, as it would mean death.



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In the room in which we were confined there was only one bed. It was a narrow, rickety affair — old and dirty. There were two or three boxes in the room and one chair. We all sat on the bed, put our heads close together, and whispered about plans of escape. We could pull out our poles and untie each other's hands, and then tie the plough lines together and let ourselves down from the window. Or, we could jump down. But it would not do to jump because that would make too much noise.

The moonshiners kept very close watch on us. Some of them seemed to be continually going and coming to and from the boats, and every little while Lige would put his head up the stair steps and look over at us to see how we were getting along.

At last things began to get quiet, but we could hear Lige and Hamon and the man they called 'Shorty' talking in the room below us. The third moonshiner, whose name was George, seemed to be on a bed, trying to take a nap. We were satisfied the only thing that had prevented Hamon from killing us was the fact that there were too many witnesses present. We thought he was just waiting to kill us as soon as he could get the others out of the way.

'We-uns can't set up hear uv a night,' said



## We Face Death

Lige — ‘every night an’ every day a-guardin’ them varmints up yonder. An’ whut’s more, I ain’t a-goin’ to do hit. Fust think I know some of them devils will git away an’ then Cap’ll poke that old long rifle uv his’n over some stump an’ I’ll be attendin’ of my own funeral.’

They began to lower their voices, but we lay down flat on the floor and put our ears to the cracks.

‘You put a candle on a box with slats across the top,’ whispered Shorty, ‘an’ call ’em down here one at a time an’ tell ’em you want to show ’em a ’possum you got in a box. An’ while they is a-leanin’ over the box tryin’ to see the ’possum, I’ll be over thar in the dark corner an’ I’ll jist step up an’ knock ’em in the head with the axe.’

I felt myself getting so weak I don’t know whether I could have walked at the moment or not, but right then I felt a loathing for those dirty drunkards down there plotting to murder boys, and I made up my mind to fight them to a finish. I got Charley to pull my pole out, and I opened my knife.

‘No,’ said Lige, ‘they ain’t fittin’ to be knocked in the head with no axe. What we-uns ought to do is to take out one at a time, bound hand an’ foot an’ bury ’em alive. That’s



## The Adventures of William Tucker

the fittin' end of sich as acts as spies fer the revenuers. Come slippin' down the river in that little yaller shantyboat with a tarpaulin stretched over the top er hit, an' landin' in on our women an' abusin' 'em. I say bury 'em alive.'

I looked at John sitting on the floor in the moonlight. His lip quivered and streams of tears ran down his face. I was crying myself.

'I'm not crying,' sobbed John, "'cause I'm 'fraid to die. I'd just soon die now as a-n-y ti-time. It's that ma-mock-mock-ing bird out there ma-makes me cry. We got one on the ba-back porch at ho-ho-H-O-M-E. He sings just like that when it's mo-moonlight. I expect he's singing like that right now at ho-ho-hom — at h-o-m-e.'

Swish — something black went flying through the air over my head. Crash — the plate on the table was knocked to the floor and shattered. It was a big black cat, with flaming yellow eyes. It was having a fit. It dashed round the room, yelling as it went. Hicks tried to get out of the way, but stumbled on a box and fell to the floor on his back with such force I was afraid the house would break down. We were all wearing our poles and the more we ran from the cat, the more we fell down.



## We Face Death

‘What in kingdom-come air the matter with ye varmints up thar?’ yelled Lige as he and the other moonshiners rushed up the steps with knife, pistol, and rifle.

The cat gave an awful scream and jumped right straight at Lige’s head, which was a couple of feet above the floor, as he stood on the steps.

That was too much, even for a moonshiner. He ducked his head and jerked down his rifle, accidentally hitting Shorty squarely on top of the head with the heavy rifle barrel. Lige fell off the steps with the cat on top of him. Shorty was knocked senseless.

Gaines, the boatman, was quick to see the opportunity.

‘Now’s our chance,’ he whispered. ‘Jump out the window, quick.’

Charley had one foot on the window sill, when he suddenly jerked to one side.

‘Hamon is standing right under the window with his rifle pointed up here,’ whispered Charley. ‘We’d better quiet down.’

Hamon finally went back into the house and the moonshiner, George, spoke up:

‘Now lemme tell you something, Lige,’ said George. ‘The Cap never told you to kill none of these here prisoners what’s in our charge.



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He jist told you not to let 'em 'scape. Ef you go and kill 'em, you goin' to git yerself in some mighty big trouble. You don't know what the Cap wants with these here boys. Maybe you done already kilt Shorty, hammerin' him on the head wid that old long gun er yourn. I'm goin' to throw this here bucket of water on him and maybe he'll wake up.'

Under this treatment Shorty soon came to life.

'Well,' said Lige, 'Uncle Dick'll be over here in the mornin' from the hills with a load of mighty good liquor he's been a-savin' an' I reckon I'll wait an' ask his advice 'bout what to do.'

Cold perspiration was standing out all over my face. I looked at John and Charley in the moonlight. I should scarcely have known them. Their faces were drawn and unnatural.

We planned constantly over different means of escape, but every chance seemed to be blocked. The moonshiners were all awake and would have pounced on us at the slightest noise. We untied each other's ropes and tied them back again, but took care that they were not so tight as before. The night wore on, but not one of us closed his eyes for a moment. We



## We Face Death

were visited every little while by one of the moonshiners.

Everything in the world has an end, so at last the end of the night came. We watched with eager and bloodshot eyes the faint gray light which began to spread over the eastern sky. It was wonderfully good to think we had, after all, lived to see the dawn of another day. As the light became bright, somehow it put a thousand new hopes in our breasts. With the light of day we felt that we had some kind of a fighting chance.

We heard a noise in front of the house and ran across to the other window and looked out. There was a tall, gray-haired, bent and worn old man, just climbing down from a bent and worn old spring wagon, to which was hitched an old 'clay bank' bent and worn horse. There was a lot of straw and old quilts in the bottom of the wagon, and two or three chicken coops on top, containing a few chickens. Lige and his assistants came out the door.

'Howdy, Uncle Dick. What ye got thar?' asked Lige.

'Under them thar chicken coops,' said the old man, 'I got forty-five gallon of corn licker what's mighty nigh two year old, an' hit's as good corn licker as ever come through a worm.



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I been four days on the road, boys, an' I'm purty nigh broke down.'

They all went into the house and began to get breakfast. It was not long before Lige came out and dived under the quilts and extracted a three-gallon jug. The old man recommended his 'licker' so highly that Lige wanted to sample it before breakfast.

The jug went in at the front door and things soon began to be noisy and boisterous. All three of our captors and the old man and Hamon began to get drunk. They all talked in very loud tones and bragged about what they had done and could do. Hamon told some very exciting tales about his exploits. Lige related to the old man the incidents of the day before, and laughed very loud about the capture of the officers. Then he brought the old man up the stairs and showed us off as he would have shown a lot of pigs in a pen. The more they drank, the more they wanted.

Lige came up the steps about half way and stood with his shoulders above the floor, holding a jug in one hand and a gourd in the other. He poured the whiskey from the jug to the gourd and drank it as if drinking water, and made us a little speech for our future guidance, based on the good that flows from each person



## We Face Death

attending strictly to his or her own business, and letting moonshiners alone.

It was not long before every soul below stairs was very drunk. Lige drew a long knife and threatened to cut one of the other men's head off, but was held back by Uncle Dick. They quarreled and talked and mumbled, and gradually simmered down until all was still.

Gaines volunteered to tiptoe downstairs and see if they were all sound asleep. Bound as he was, with the pole sticking out under each of his arms, he turned sideways and went down one step at a time. It was a brave act. We could see him through the cracks in the floor. He bent over each man carefully and listened to his breathing. They lay about the floor like hogs, with foam bubbling out of their mouths — an awful and shameful sight.

Gaines came back and told us to untie each other as fast as we could. We undid the knots with trembling hands, and tied several pieces of the plough lines together. One end of the rope we fastened to the bedpost near the window and down we slid. Two of us had almost to lift old Hicks through the window, and John told him for Heaven's sake not to let that wooden leg scrape against the house.

We all eventually got down. Charley



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grabbed Nanny Drury, slapped his hand over her mouth to keep her from bleating, untied her leather rope with the plush handle still on the end in perfectly good order, and away we ran as hard as we could go for the boats.

Gaines primed his engine and this time she began to work at once. He gave her all the gasoline she could swallow and down the river we went, lashed to *The Ocean Queen*. Of course, we were terribly afraid the moonshiners would wake up and pursue us, but just then I do not think you could have aroused those sotted beasts with a brass band.

Polly and Romeo were still on the boat, and showed very plainly their delight at our return.

We had proceeded down the river several miles as fast as we could go, when we suddenly came in sight of a large group of men on the bank, all carrying guns. Gaines knew them at once. They were citizens from the town who had come out in search of the officers. We stopped and breathlessly related our tale as best we could. They decided to go to the relief of the officers who had been captured, and all piled on our boats. There must have been twenty of them.

We went on down to the old Mississippi, and it certainly looked good to me and two other



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boys of my acquaintance. We headed up the river for the place where we had left the whiskey boat. Before we had gone two miles we saw a shantyboat coming down the river a long distance away. We at once put into the bank and hid in the mouth of a little creek.

Our party got their guns ready and, sure enough, when she came abreast of us we could see it was the whiskey boat. Just as they were about to pass us, not more than seventy-five yards from the shore, we shoved off from the bank and quickly bore down upon them with all our guns cocked and ready.

We came alongside before the law-breakers discovered us and a dozen of our party jumped aboard the whiskey boat. The dark-faced man who was the leader, saw that resistance was useless, and stepped forward and held up his hands in sign of surrender. Besides the leader, all the other moonshiners who had captured us and the officers were on the whiskey boat, except Lige and his two friends. All the law-breakers were quickly handcuffed and the marshals and deputies released. All the officers were prisoners on the boat. The moonshiners had awaited the return of the marshal and the two deputies who went out to overtake the woman who escaped from the whiskey boat.



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They never could find the woman and returned to the boat, only to be ambushed and made prisoners.

The two United States marshals and Mr. Archibald and several deputy sheriffs got into the moonshiners' motor boat and went up the little river to attend to Lige and Hamon and their companions. They afterwards reported that Lige and his two assistants and Uncle Dick were all still drunk and asleep on the floor when they arrived, but Hamon was nowhere to be found. The officers slipped a shiny pair of close-fitting steel bracelets on each, and then waked them. All of these law-breakers afterwards were sentenced to terms in federal prisons.

We left the dirty and ill-smelling shanty-boat of the illicit whiskey dealers there on the bank made fast to an immense cypress tree. The *Ocean Queen* and Gaines's boat, lashed together, were loaded down with citizens, officers, and prisoners, as we worked our way up the river close to the bank, headed for the little town from whence we had started on this, to us, memorable undertaking.

A large crowd met us on the bank as the *Queen* made the landing at the town, but the first thing we saw was Wag running up and



## We Face Death

down at the water's edge and barking. He knew The Ocean Queen. The antics he cut up when once he had boarded the Queen were wonderful to behold. Abe also came aboard as soon as we landed. He wore a wide grin and said he had been living on turkey and lemon pie and ice cream and sherbet ever since we left. Great satisfaction was expressed on all sides because the community was at last rid of the criminals who spread trouble and misery wherever they went.

About ten dollars' worth of goods had been taken out of our store on the boat, but we felt we were lucky that the loss was not greater. The whiskey men thought they were going to keep the Queen, so did not take the trouble to remove the stock.

Mrs. Mistletoe gave us a fine dinner and then put us all to bed. How good that bed did feel! We got up and ate supper and soon went back to bed and slept until morning. After a nice bath and a good breakfast we felt that the world still held some charms for us. John and I found some charms close at hand in the Misses Mistletoe, who had come down the river with us. Charley spent an hour writing a long letter to Miss Queenie La Farge. He had a bad case of 'puppy love.'



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Hicks received so much attention from the citizens on account of the lovely black eye he had acquired in combat with the outlaws that he became quite a hero. Before we left the town he was giving out a thrilling description of a deadly struggle between him and Hamon.

That day and the next night we spent with the Mistletoes. Mr. Archibald and the marshals and every one thanked us for the part we and our boat had played in capturing the moonshiners and we were all glad if we had helped in any way.



## CHAPTER XVII

### *The Party at General Martin's*

WHEN we took our seats at the breakfast table that morning, each of us found on his plate a dainty note. We opened them, and, reading the beautifully clear writing, were informed that the pleasure of our presence was requested at a party to be given that night at General Martin's home.

Mr. Archibald explained to us that General Martin was one of their distinguished citizens, who lived in a fine typical old *ante-bellum* Southern home about a mile out of town, surrounded by a large family of both boys and girls and a cloud of colored servants. Mr. Archibald said the party had been arranged several weeks ago, but in honor of our services in helping to capture the famous gang of moonshiners, and as General Martin was well acquainted with Charley's father, we had been favored with invitations.

Mr. Archibald and the young men of the town took charge of us that day, and would not allow us to spend one cent for anything. They



## The Adventures of William Tucker

fitted us all out in full-dress suits, stiff bosom shirts, white bow ties, patent-leather dancing-pumps, and everything we needed.

That evening about half-past eight we assisted Miss Mildred and Miss Lucy Mistletoe into hacks, which had the tops let down, and with Mr. Archibald and some other guests we rode out the old winding road beneath the great oaks and hickories to General Martin's residence.

There was a colored servant at the gate to open and shut it, on the arrival of the various carriages. General Martin's yard must have included fifteen acres or more. The house sat back from the road probably two hundred yards. In the grounds were many fragrant magnolias, as well as pines. There were also many giant oaks which must have been hundreds of years old. The scene was lighted by a bright moon and a great many Chinese lanterns strung from tree to tree. The residence itself was of brick and two stories high. As nearly as I can recollect, it contained about seventeen rooms, with three or four brick out-buildings used by the servants. In front and on both sides it was surrounded by a very wide porch, protected by a beautiful iron railing, which was moulded in artistic winding vines



## The Party at General Martin's

and bunches of iron grapes and other ornamentations.

There was another colored servant at the front steps to open the door of our conveyance. We were welcomed by one of the sons of the family, and, after divesting ourselves of our outer garments, we were presented to General and Mrs. Martin and about five or six of their daughters and four or five sons, as well as a large number of charming young lady guests.

There was a large ballroom with a waxed floor. The ballroom opened into a large sun parlor, which also had a floor as smooth as glass. At one end of the ballroom was drawn up in great dignity what was then a famous colored orchestra. They were from Natchez and were known far and wide. There were five violins, a cornet, a flute, and a bass violin.

As a mark of honor, Charley was selected to lead the grand opening march. John and I were very much pleased at this because we thought Charley could hold his own in the ballroom with anything they could 'trot out.' John was a good dancer and I could dance a little, but we took great pride in the dancing of Charley. The grand march was fine, but the dance I shall never forget was the 'Blue Danube Waltz' and its many, many encores.



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Critics may have been able to pick flaws in the technique and rendition of those four colored second violinists, but whatever one did, they all did. They had practiced together for years, and played as one man. With the negro's wonderful natural ear for harmony, they produced a result which was marvelous. The bass-fiddle darkey was about six feet, five inches tall, and very knock-kneed. He was as black as ebony and very powerful. He must have had a soul for music, for he certainly knew how to bring out the best points of the composer.

I wish you could have been in that old Southern home when these eight colored musicians got into the swing of the 'Blue Danube.' Just to look at the towering dignity of the bass violinist was a poem in itself. But to our eyes Charley was the grandest thing in the house. How he did dance!

But the most beautiful, lasting, and inspiring recollection of that night, which still flits ever and anon through my memory, is the sound of the gentle voices of the women in that Mississippi home. Those sweet, pure, harmonious, rich, musical voices charm me still.

We marched in, arm in arm with our chosen partners, to a great supper, where we sat and



## The Party at General Martin's

were waited upon by a dozen or two of colored 'house servants.'

Of course we had to answer a great many questions about our experiences with the moonshiners. It was very easy then to smile and pretend it was 'nothing at all.'

What a wonderful contrast we presented in our good clothes in this beautiful home, compared to our condition only a night or two before, when John listened to the mocking bird, and Lige and his assistant talked about 'the 'possum in the box!'

This shows it never pays to give up. Just when everything seems absolutely hopeless — when there is no way out at all — Fate most often intervenes. A lightning change takes place and soon all is well. If you ever get in a tight place, just remember this, and stick it out to the end, and more than likely you will have a pleasant surprise. Keep your face to the front. Every cur will bite a man who tries to run away.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### *What One Bottle of Whiskey Did to The Ocean Queen*

THE next day we left our kind Mississippi friends and headed down the river for Vicksburg.

The days sped swiftly by and we had almost reached Island No. 98, not very far north of Vicksburg. One morning a little before daylight, Charley, John, and I were asleep in the cabin and Abe was asleep on his pallet in the store. Hicks was on watch in the 'gravy eye.'

We were suddenly awakened by the deep voice of a big steamboat whistle and cries and shouts. We all rushed on deck. There by the pale moonlight we could see bearing down upon us a great fleet of barges being shoved up the river by a powerful towboat. On our little forward deck, sprawled flat, was Hicks with the quart whiskey bottle in his hand in a drunken sleep. He had found the bottle of whiskey for which he had been looking.

The fleet of great empty coal barges spread out on each side of us for hundreds of feet. It was too late! In an instant we knew our fate was sealed! All four of us grabbed old Hicks,



## What One Bottle of Whiskey Did

who was minus his wooden leg, and by superhuman efforts managed to climb on top of our cabin, pulling Hicks after us.

The barges steadily came toward us and we steadily floated down to them. Our boat had no power. It was only a shantyboat. We were helpless. Men on the barges ran about with lanterns yelling, and then — CRASH! — we came together!

The rail of the coal barge we hit was several feet above the top of our cabin, but we succeeded in climbing up on the barge, lifting and shoving the maudlin Hicks with us.

John had thrown Wag on top of our cabin, and he and Romeo, with our assistance, got aboard the barge. Wag was barking violently with every breath and Romeo was screeching wildly with excitement. I don't know how Polly got on the barge, but one of the towboat men found her walking around in the coal dust, talking to herself, as if she were bitterly complaining about something.

The terrible force of the river jammed down on our poor little boat. It was shoved by the force of the current under the slanting bow of the big barge. With true courage and presence of mind Abe jumped back on the Queen and seized a line that was fast to one of the cleats.



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He leaped back on the barge, braced himself, and hung on to the line with grim determination. But for this brave act our boat might have gone under the barge to destruction.

As the shantyboat hung there under the bow of the barge, poor little Nanny Drury, on the top of the now slanting deck of the roof garden, stood on her hind legs and bleated a cry that pierced our hearts. I hung down from the barge, and extending one bare foot, caught Nanny's leather rope between my toes. It slipped and I thought Nanny was lost, but suddenly I felt something soft but firm against my foot. I knew it was the plush handle. I lifted my foot as high as I could, and Charley, leaning far over, managed to grasp it. He pulled and Nanny swung clear of the deck. The leather collar was forced up over her face and it looked as if she would fall into the river — but no — the collar caught on her little horns — and Charley landed her over in the big barge.

The Ocean Queen was strong and watertight, but she could not stand the weight of the whole river. The water began to rush into the cabin and we thought she was going to the bottom in spite of Abe. However, a fearless





WE SUCCEEDED IN CLIMBING UP ON THE BARGE, LIFTING AND SHOVING  
THE MAUDLIN HICKS WITH US







## What One Bottle of Whiskey Did

towboat man took his life in his hands by jumping down to the deck of the Queen to make fast a large hawser, which was quickly given a few turns round a great cleat on the barge by another deckhand. Now our boat could not sink, but she had several feet of water in the cabin and was damaged by the collision.

Charley was crying and would have struck Hicks in the face, but I restrained him. John and I were speechless. There stood Hicks on his one leg, with the whiskey bottle still in his hand. He seemed to sober in an instant. He threw the bottle into the river, looked up to the stars above, raised his hand to Heaven, and said:

‘So help me God, that’s the last drop of whiskey I’ll ever drink as long as I live.’

The towboat men came running across the barges, and soon collected round three nearly naked boys, a nearly naked man with one leg, and a silent black giant, still standing there with the line in his hands. They carried us back to the towboat, asking us a hundred times why we had all gone to sleep, floating down the middle of the Mississippi River. We did not say one word against Hicks. We said nothing about the whiskey and took our full share of



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the blame. We liked old Hicks. He understood boys and was a fine companion, but we well knew where lay his weak spot.

The kind-hearted river men (for many of them have hearts as soft as their hands are hard) gave us the best clothes they could find. Of course they did not fit, and we all looked like a choice lot of scarecrows. Charley and I waddled round in trousers that were made for some old mate who weighed about two hundred and fifty pounds, while John disported his skinny legs in a little pair of knee trousers made for a boy about eight years old, and which fitted him like the paper on the wall. Hicks had to jump about like a bird. Afterwards the cook gave him an old broom, which he turned upside down and used as a crutch.

We thought all our nice things were ruined — all the nice rugs and pictures, John's aunt's beautiful silk flag, Charley's brother's silk shirt and his mother's opera glasses, and my guns. The faithful little *Ocean Queen*, with her beautiful name in splendid white and blue and gold letters, was being dragged along half submerged in the muddy Mississippi.

The captain of the towboat told us that at daylight he would try to put what was left of our boat on the bank. This was accomplished



## What One Bottle of Whiskey Did

after considerable difficulty, and the big tow-boat with its wide-spreading fleet of barges slowly pushed on up the river.

There we stood on the Mississippi shore at the landing of a small village, as the sun began to rise over the forest, half naked, shipwrecked, disconsolate. Hicks was still using the old broom. He never found his peg leg. It had floated off while the hull of the Queen was under water.

As the day advanced, a crowd of citizens gathered about our wrecked vessel and heard our story. Then they started in to help us. They could not have been more kind if we had been their own children instead of strangers. We were invited to breakfast at the home of the merchant who owned the principal store in the little town. I can see that breakfast now. We had country ham and fried eggs and brown gravy — plenty of it — and a great big dish of French-fried potatoes and hot tea and coffee, and corn cakes and genuine Louisiana sugar-house molasses, the kind that leaves a thick deposit of real sugar at the bottom. As we relaxed from our excitement, our appetites returned. We certainly did justice to that fine meal. We were a wild-looking lot — Hicks with no peg leg, John in the small-boy trousers,



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and Abe in a linen duster. None of us had any shirts or shoes.

The merchant's wife gave us some under-clothing and old shirts and old shoes, and we began to feel much better. We went down to the wreck and were surprised to see the Queen high and dry on the bank. Our Mississippi friends had rigged tackle and pulled her out of the water and were then bailing out the hull.

We found everything except a few light articles that had floated away. Of course, all our goods were soaked, and the forward part of the roof garden was smashed, but the strong hull we found to be undamaged. We spread all the tents and clothing and everything else out on the bank in the hot sunshine. They were nearly all dry by the time the sun went down. We found all of our money and soon began to be respectable again. A man who owned a saw-mill near by took Hicks's measure and made him a new peg leg.

We spent about a week at this hospitable landing, and repaired the upper deck and put on some fresh paint where it was needed. None of these people would take a cent in pay for what they did for us.

Once more The Ocean Queen was afloat and ready to navigate the great river. We thanked



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all our kind friends at the scene of the wreck for their open-handed assistance in our time of need, then worked out into the current with the determination to make as good time as possible until we found Hamon, who, we were satisfied, had passed us and gone down the river.

As we now had almost no stock left, we got into the middle of the channel and with the assistance of Abe on the sweeps we soon reached Vicksburg.

Charley, who was cashier and bookkeeper, informed us that our total profits to date had been five hundred and twenty-five dollars and some cents. We had made two hundred dollars from the chill tonic, and one hundred dollars on our first stock, one hundred and seventy-five on the stock purchased at Helena, and fifty dollars from other sources. Our only expenses had been for ice, the second-hand ice-box, Abe's small wages, groceries for our table, one 'privilege license,' and a little expense in connection with the wreck.

We climbed up the long hill to the city of Vicksburg and lost no time in buying a full new stock. We found the wholesale merchants most obliging, and by noon of the next day The Ocean Queen store was packed to overflowing



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with attractive new goods. Hicks had made and painted two small sign boards for the store. One read 'DRUGS' and the other 'POP ON ICE.' He hung these just below our big business sign on the forward deck. Our mercantile stock was now the largest we had ever had aboard.

As the sun was descending over the Louisiana shore, which was now on our right hand as we went down the river, we floated out from Vicksburg with everything in shipshape and did not tie up to the bank until after dark.



## CHAPTER XIX

*We Sight Hamon's Boat — John Mason Loved the Trees*

THE next morning, after I had finished my breakfast and climbed up on the roof garden to enjoy the cool shade and the morning breeze, I found Charley already up there seated in a canvas chair with his legs sticking out over the rope guards. A very dark frown was clouding his features.

‘What’s the matter, Charley?’ I asked.

‘Oh, I’ve just been thinking,’ answered Charley, ‘how we’ve been letting this thief Hamon put it all over us. We ought to have a system and go after him right and get him arrested, if we have to follow him to Calcutta, India. If you and John mean business, let’s draw up a written oath and agreement and all sign it in blood and make our seals, and stick right to him until we land him behind the bars. What we ought to do is to shadow him to his boat and hide around there close so we can hear him and Ginnie talking, and then we’ll have some reliable “dope” on which to base our operations. The way we are doing now is just



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to run up on him by chance. We never will catch him that way.'

John joined us on the roof and we all agreed to 'follow Hamon to Calcutta, India,' if necessary to catch him. I was commissioned to go below and write the oath. I went into the cabin and let down our little swinging table, got the pen and ink and paper, and spent an hour and a half with my tongue poked out and my legs wrapped around the table leg, composing and writing that document. I still have the original.

The following is a verbatim copy:

On board the U.S. vessel  
Ocean Queen

South of Vicksburg, Miss.

WHEREAS it has come to the notice of the officers of this vessel that one Zekeial Hamon, a very bad character, train-robber, thief, and murderer is at large and is very liable to commit many other crimes at any minute — against the piece and dignity of the State, and

WHEREAS, the said Hamon, aforesaid, has all ready heaped many atrouchious indignaties on the heads of the officers of the said vessel, we the said officers of said vessel, to wit, Charley Kerr, John Guheen and William Tucker now solemnly agree with each other and take this solemn oath, so help them God, that they will follow and cause



## We Sight Hamon's Boat

to have arrested by proper authorized officers of the law, the said Zeke Hamon, as aforesaid, even if they have to follow him to Calcutta, India.

Signed with our blood and sealed with the seals of our private rings, this —— day of —— —.

Charley Kerr .

John Guheen

William Tucker

The seals were made with real sealing wax and we used the top of the ink-bottle stopper instead of 'private rings.' All we had were 'public' rings, so we had to use the ink-stopper.

Charley had a pin in his hand and was all ready to stick it in his arm, so as to draw blood with which to sign the document.

'I tell you what's a fact, Charley,' said I, 'we better not be sticking pins in our arms to get blood — we may get blood poisoning instead. Let's make a landing and get some pokeberries. We can squeeze out the juice. It's just as red as anybody's blood, and it writes fine and dandy — and, besides that, it's poisonous. You couldn't have anything better than a red, poisonous, natural wild Indian ink to sign up an oath to trail Hamon. How could you?'

Charley and John agreed with me. So we made the landing and got the pokeberries and



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signed the agreement with pokeberry juice, but that's a secret. I think John and Charley have told all their children that we signed the oath in real blood — a cupful of it.

That afternoon about three or four o'clock we sighted Hamon's boat on the Mississippi shore half a mile away. We made a landing around a bend where we could not be seen by Hamon, and Charley said: 'Now, what we got to do is to get up on the bank and hide and watch that boat until we see Hamon come in or go out. Then we'll know what we are doing and to-night we can creep up on his boat and listen to him talk and find out his plans, then we can accomplish something. Nobody ever will catch Hamon just by luck.'

John, Charley, and I climbed up the bank and walked cautiously through the woods toward Hamon's boat. When we were about halfway there, we met Sam Mason, a young negro who had worked for Charley's father in Memphis. Sam's father and mother, in the days of slavery, belonged to the Kerr family. We greeted our old colored friend with pleasure.

'Mr. Charley, I sho' is glad to see you-all. What you-all doin' down here in dat shanty-boat?'



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'Well, Sam,' replied Charley, 'we are just taking a little voyage to New Orleans for our health, and doing a little commercial business on the side. Sam, where is your father now?'

'He's settin' right over yander, yuther side the gin-house,' answered Sam. 'He jist sets out thar in his cheer, under them big trees, an' reads his Bible, an' talks out loud to hisself. Pappy gittin' mighty old now, Mr. Charley, an' his mine ain't much on dis world, sence Mammy died. Dey been married more'n fifty years when she died. You-all know my brother Bill what went up Norf an' worked in de fact'ry? — well, he sont down here fer Pappy to come up dar an' live wif him. He sont money fer de ticket an' everything. Pappy, he went up dar, but he wa'n't satisfied. He jis grieve for dis here country, till Bill had to sen' him back. You-all come on over here an' see him. He sho' will be proud to see you.'

There sat Uncle John Mason in a great, heavy, home-made chair, which had a frame of hickory and a seat and back of split white-oak strips, woven together the same as a cane seat. One glance showed that in his younger days he must have been a man of great strength. He was tall and broad, and black as ink. His hair and beard were gray, and his face fairly



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beamed with a kind and gentle Christian spirit. He had sometimes preached to his race. He had been a hard worker, a good father, and a faithful servant. He gave us a most cordial welcome and had Sam bring us chairs.

Charley whispered to me and John. 'This is a fine place to watch Hamon's boat. Let's sit here in the shade and see if Hamon shows himself about the boat, and in the meantime we can listen to Uncle John.'

'Uncle John,' said Charley, 'I hear you have been up North, living with your son. How did you like it up there?'

Uncle John pushed his square, steel-rimmed spectacles up on top of his head, laid his Bible on a box by his side, and looked around at us with an humble and patient smile, as he replied:

'Mr. Charley, they wuz jist as good to me up thar as they could be. They gin me this fine suit of clothes I got on, an' dese shoes, an' Willie gin me money, an' rid me roun' eve'whar, an' eve'thing was powerful fine up dar, but, Mr. Charley, dey want no *trees* up dar! 'Course I knows dey wuz a few little saplin's stuck in de groun' wid ropes an' strings an' wires tied to 'em all round an' fastened to stakes to keep de win' offen dat lake from blowin' 'em slap-dab



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flat on de groun'. But dey wusn't no usefulness, or no medicine, or no love, or no visions in dem poor, pitiful, captive little sprouts. I jist long an' long fer dese gran' old trees roun' here, tell finally Willie had to sen' me back.

'When I was up Norf settin' by a outrageous big stove, lookin' fru' de double winders nailed down tight, so you couldn't git a breaf of fresh air, while de snow jist whizzed roun' de house an' piled up, an' de cold win' whined an' howled an' whipped 'bout, an' shook de house, an' rattled de do's, like he was in a turrible rage 'cause he couldn't git in — right den I thought 'bout dese beautiful trees roun' here — de oaks, an' de walnuts, an' de hickories, de sassafack an' persimmon, tell I couldn't git no peace a-tall. I jist sot an' sot thar an' turned hit over in my mine. Arter while I 'greed wid myself dat I couldn't 'ford to think 'bout dese beautiful trees, 'mongst de snow an' de ice an' de howling win'. I says to myself, "Arter dis, I ain't gwine think 'bout nothin' but vines an' weeds, an' maybe I kin stan' hit a little longer."

'Den my mine commence to have visions an' pictures of vines an' weeds. I pulled my cheer a little closer to dat big stove, an' de fust thing I seen in my vision wuz a gympson weed. No-



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body roun' here don't think a gympson weed is good fer nothin' 'tall, but right then, Mr. Charley, that gympson weed looked mighty good to me. Hit sho' did. Then my mine roll roun', an' I seen a whole field full er dog fennel. That look mighty natchel, but my mine roll on an' I seen de woodbine twinin' roun' my cabin do'. I could stan' that, but when I seen that great bank er sweet white an' yaller-blossomed honeysuckle on de side er my boy's house, I commence to weaken. Then my mine move on lak a magic-lantern slidin' picture, an' de next scene what come befo' me was all my chilluns an' my grand-chilluns playin' together in de warm summer time. Dey wuz playin' in de shade of a great muscadine vine, what wuz hangin' down more'n a hundred feet frum a giant sweet-gum tree. Dey wuz all barefooted an' happy, an' laughin', an' eatin' muscadine grapes an' swingin' in de muscadine swing. I look out frum under de canopy of de muscadine vine in de bright, warm sunshine, an' I see dat beautifulest of all weeds — de purple-topped iron weed — hundreds of 'em. Dat beautiful purple 'min' me of Christ, an' His glory when He riz on high an' passed thu' de clouds an' went on to Heaven. De vines an' de weeds wuz wusser'n de trees.



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De tears commence to run down my face, an' Willie come in de room, an' say:

“Pappy, look dar — your coat-tail on fire!”

‘I sez, “I don’t keer ef hit is; let hit burn — I’s havin’ dreams an’ visions, I is.”’

‘Willie retch down an’ put out my coat-tail an’ say:

“Pappy, you settin’ too close to dis stove. You gwine burn up. Lordy, Pappy, how-come you cryin’ like dat? Ain’t I bin good to you?”’

‘I say, “Willie, hit ain’t nothin’; I wuz thinkin’ ’bout de honeysuckle an’ de muscadine vine an’ de iron weed.”’

‘Willie say, “Pappy, you cryin’ ’bout dem old weeds, when you up here in dis beautiful city, wid asphalt streets, an’ street cyars, an’ theaters, an’ eve’thing?”’

‘I say, “Yes, Willie, I loves de weeds an’ de vines; maybe I could stan’ thinkin’ ’bout dem — but when I has a vision an’ sees all dem vines an’ weeds, I kin smell de pennyroyal eve’whar so strong! Willie — de pennyroyal more’n I kin stan’. Take me home, Willie — take me home!”’

‘Sam, you and Sugar — that’s my youngest gran’-daughter — an’ them two boys, go over in de patch an’ git de biggest watermelons you



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kin fin', an' take 'em down to Mr. Charley's boat.'

John<sup>r</sup> pointed toward the river. We looked and saw the tall figure of Hamon coming out of the woods and going to his boat. As we stood there with Uncle John Mason, Hamon cast off his lines and floated down the river.

We bade farewell to Uncle John and Sam, and soon stored in our ice-boxes four very large watermelons. Sam went back up the hill from the boat to his 'pappy' with a large bottle of 'Florida' water and four large bandanna handkerchiefs.



## CHAPTER XX

*Bullard's Sawmill — Hamon on a Hand-Car — Viola and Rufus*

THE next day, as we floated down from landing to landing, we began to hear about Bullard's Sawmill, which the citizens of that locality called 'Bullard's Band Mill.' By this they meant to signify that the mill was not one of the old-fashioned kind which sawed the logs by means of a circular saw. A band mill saws with a long, flexible steel band that runs over wheels like a belt. The output of one of these band mills is generally very large. We decided to stop at this big band mill, which was not very many miles below, on the Louisiana side.

The next day we tied up in a creek alongside the great lumber yard of Bullard's mill. Several hundred negroes were employed here at good wages, and we saw at once we could do a lot of business. Charley and John and I walked all over the mill and examined every detail of machinery and construction. A boy likes to know how everything works.

The mill, which was in full operation, was a



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giant affair. The great logs of cypress, pine, oak, hickory, gum, and many other woods were hauled in from the forests on a narrow-gauge railroad. The trees were felled and cut into sections and loaded on log wagons drawn by oxen or mules. The wagons brought the logs to certain places where they were pulled up on to the flat cars.

There were several small locomotives busily puffing about the lumber yards, to our great interest and amusement. These little engines burned wood, as that fuel cost practically nothing. They had very large smokestacks, which were covered across the top with steel netting to prevent sparks from being puffed out. This was very necessary, as a fortune in manufactured lumber was stacked in the yards and every precaution against fire had to be taken.

One of the engineers let us ride with him. It certainly was fun to sit in this almost toy locomotive and hear her strain and wheeze and puff and fuss and pull at the heavy loads, and then go dashing off as fast as her little driving wheels could carry her when once she was uncoupled from those heavy loads of logs. As she stood still on a side track, panting, after her violent exertions, it seemed to us she whispered in a spent voice:



## Hamon on a Hand-Car

‘I’m tired, I’m tired, I’m tired, I’m tired.’

But the engineer said the sound we thought was the whisper of the tired little engine was only the air pump, pumping compressed air for the air brakes.

The logs were dumped into a mill pond and drawn up into the mill by a big chain, and placed on a ‘carriage’ which ran back and forth by the side of the swiftly moving band saw. As the sawyer, standing on the rear end of the carriage, pulled a big lever, the carriage would move forward on its wheels upon a steel track, carrying a log perhaps five or six or seven feet in diameter. But these band mills can saw logs of almost any size. That is one great advantage they have over a circular saw-mill. The great log would strike the band saw, and there would be an awful humming and buzzing and howling and flying of sawdust, but before you would have time to catch your breath twice a big wide board would be sawed off the side of the log as straight and nice as could be. Then the sawyer would reverse the big lever, and the carriage would run quickly back to repeat the operation, time after time — all day long — and sometimes all night long, too.

We went back to the Queen and found



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Hicks and Abe were doing a big business with the mill hands, all of whom seemed to have money. We decided we had best wash up and go over to Captain Bullard's office and pay our respects. We put on some clean shirts and blacked our shoes and changed our clothes and made ourselves generally presentable.

The Captain was in his office and gave us a hearty welcome when we told him our names and explained what we were doing. He also knew of Charley's father's firm. He was a large man, weighing about two hundred and sixty pounds. His face was red and freckled. Wherever he went he carried a small handbag or valise. The sole contents of this bag was the Captain's revolver, or 'cannon,' by which name every one in that section knew it. The pistol was too large to be carried in any pocket, so he devised this means of transportation for his artillery. We saw this pistol afterward, and it deserved its reputation. As nearly as I can estimate, it was about a foot and a half long and the muzzle was so big I could stick my thumb in it. I remember it had a big red handle, mottled with black. Some of the mill hands told us the Captain had been compelled to kill people on several occasions. I don't know whether this was true or not, but I know



## Hamon on a Hand-Car

we were most respectful in his presence and instantly agreed with everything he said.

The Captain surprised us by inviting us to go over to his house with him to dinner. We accepted with thanks. The Captain picked up his little valise containing his 'cannon,' and we marched out with him in the hot sun to his home.

When we had arrived on the shady veranda, the Captain introduced us to Mrs. Bullard and his two sons, Tom and Henry, who were several years older than we were. We had a fine dinner, and the Bullards were just as nice to us as they could be. We wanted to do something to show our appreciation of this kind hospitality, so we asked Tom and Henry to come with us to The Ocean Queen and see our tents and other things.

We took Tom and Henry to the Queen and showed them everything. We got out some of the tents and spread them on the bank. Tom and Henry then suggested that we go on a 'camp-hunt,' which suited us exactly.

The next morning we left Hicks and Abe to run the store, and we loaded four or five tents, three dogs, and a lot of other things on a flat car coupled in front of one of the little locomotives, and away we went at a very fast speed



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through the great forest. We tipped and swayed and bumped along until I thought we should certainly jump the track, but Tom only looked back and laughed and ran a little faster. We went out to the end of one of the branches and stopped at a point about five miles from the mill.

We were accompanied by two negro boys who put up the tents and did all the cooking and other work. We all had shotguns and plenty of ammunition. I went with Henry Bullard and John and Charley set out with Tom.

Charley won the honors of the day by returning to camp that night with a big wild turkey gobbler hanging over his back. Tom Bullard had imitated the call of a turkey hen and induced Mr. Gobbler, under these fake pretenses, to approach very close to a big log, behind which Charley was kneeling, with his gun resting on the log. Charley waited until the gobbler got very close, and then blew off his head. We ate this gobbler during the next day. If there is anything better to eat than a real wild turkey, I have never been so fortunate as to find it.

Late the next afternoon, as Henry and I were tramping along on the bank of a small



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creek, following some turkeys we had heard calling and gobbling, we came round a bend of the creek, and there, right in front of me, was Hamon's shantyboat, hidden away in a beautiful little pocket, covered by overhanging limbs. I stopped instantly. Neither Hamon nor Ginnie was to be seen. I backed off as cautiously as I could and managed to attract the attention of Henry by motioning to him. He came to me, but at first I could scarcely get him to understand the situation. As we walked back to camp, I told Henry all about Hamon and our efforts to capture him. Henry was determined that Hamon should never get back to the Mississippi River.

We broke camp at once, sending one of the colored boys through the woods a mile or so to a spur track where there was an engine and flat-car train waiting for logs. The engine came after us about dark and we started back for the mill.

That night we all gathered on Captain Bullard's front porch and organized a posse to capture Hamon. Captain Bullard said we had best surround the shantyboat the next morning a little before daylight and wait for Hamon to come out. The Captain said he would then order Hamon to throw up his hands, and if



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Hamon failed to do so, we would take him by force.

Besides the three owners of the Y. & M. V. Navigation Company, the party was to be composed of Captain Bullard, his two sons, and four or five citizens who had reputations as bear-hunters and good shots. There was also a little Frenchman who insisted on being allowed to go with us. He was an undertaker by the name of Dumas. He may have had an eye for business, but, as you will see directly, he came very near being his own customer.

Very early the next morning we boarded a flat car and rode out to within a quarter of a mile of Hamon's boat. We could have gone closer, but we were afraid of arousing his suspicions. The log-road track passed within a hundred yards of his boat.

Most of our party were armed with rifles and pistols, but Mr. Dumas had an old single-barrel shotgun, loaded with buckshot. We carefully crept toward Hamon's boat under the directions of Captain Bullard, until we formed a semicircle around the lair of this desperate criminal.

We had to wait a long time. Not a sound did we hear until the sun was well above the horizon. Then we could hear noises in the boat,



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and I knew something would happen in a few minutes. At last Hamon came out on his forward deck in his shirt-sleeves, and yawned and stretched. Then he walked up the bank, perfectly oblivious of our presence.

‘Throw up yer hands, sir!’ yelled Captain Bullard.

Hamon instantly crouched like an animal at bay and I saw his hand go to his belt for that awful knife.

‘Throw up yer hands; yer under arrest!’ shouted the Captain again, but Hamon, knife in hand, dashed forward, straight at Dumas. The undertaker was so excited that he pulled the trigger of his gun while it was yet pointed straight up to heaven through the branches of a hickory tree. It went off with a terrible noise and the hickory nuts rained down. Hamon gave little Dumas a blow on the nose, landing him upon his head on the bank of the creek, with his mouth full of mud.

‘Bull-do-we!’ boomed Captain Bullard’s cannon, as Hamon ran through the underbrush.

‘Bang-boom-bang,’ went all the other guns and pistols in a general broadside, but Hamon had too much cover and was running too fast. Nothing stopped him.



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‘Thar he goes down the railroad track. Ketch him!’ yelled the Captain.

In a moment we saw Hamon jump on a hand car, which was standing on a spur track, and begin to pump like a demon. He was flying down the track, pumping the handcar at a great rate.

Upon the Captain’s orders Tom Bullard ran down the track at his very best speed for our engine and car. He soon came back with them, but we could see the steam was low.

All of us, except Dumas, who had already started for home on foot, climbed aboard, some on the engine and some on the flat car ahead. We could still see Hamon between a quarter and a half-mile away going strong. Henry Bullard acted as fireman. The first thing he did was to throw in some wood, and then pour about a quart of kerosene in a tin can and throw it into the fire-box on top of the wood. The fire in the engine roared and soon we had enough steam to increase our speed.

Faster and faster went the little log engine, until her small driving wheels were fairly flying. We began to overtake old Hamon. We could see him looking back at us. I thought that at last this old thief would certainly be captured.

As we drew still nearer and the Captain was



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preparing to let go with his 'cannon' again, Hamon reached down in a tool-box, which we learned afterwards was on the handcar, and pulled up a piece of very heavy log chain about eight or ten feet long. He held this outstretched in his two long arms, and before we knew what he was about he dropped the chain across one of the rails.

Tom instantly reversed the engine and put on the brakes, but it was too late. Our speed was too great. We could not stop in time.

We hit the chain on a curve and the flat car and engine jumped the track and turned over on the side of the roadbed. We were all thrown off heels over heads, but John did the prettiest flying leap for life of any of us. He was standing on the front end of the flat car, on the side upon which the chain had been dropped. He was catapulted into the air in a sitting posture, with his legs sticking straight out in front. He sailed forward through space for fifteen or twenty feet, and then, in this sitting position, lit, like a hydroplane, upon the surface of the water in a long barrow pit beside the railroad. In this pit there were two or three inches of water over a bed of slick, slimy, tar-black mud. John slid through the mud and water like a boat in a 'shoot the chutes' for a distance of



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twenty-five or thirty feet, and brought up with a bump against solid ground at the farther end.

When John climbed out of the pit and turned toward us, his face was as black as Abe's. He was plastered with mud all over. He began to gesticulate and try to explain something. I do not know what in the world he was trying to explain.

One of the men got his foot caught under the cab of the engine and broke his leg, but none of the others of us was injured.

Captain Bullard sent Tom through the woods to a log camp a mile away to get another engine and car. As this engine had to go back several miles to get on our track, it was nearly an hour before it arrived. We helped the injured man aboard and returned to the point where we had surrounded Hamon's boat. We got off and walked across to the creek, but, as I well knew would be the case, Hamon's shantyboat was nowhere to be seen.

When we got back to the millyard and approached the Queen, I saw Hicks and Abe were doing a rushing business. There was a considerable crowd of mill hands, both male and female, around the boat. It is almost impossible to get all the negro laborers to work every day. As soon as they get a few dollars ahead, they



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will 'lay off.' The mill had started to sawing, but many of the employees preferred to dicker with Abe and Hicks, and enjoy the delights of sardines and bologna sausage rather than to work and sweat in the hot lumber yard.

As we boarded the boat, I noticed a little darky girl, who was perhaps twenty years of age. She was all decked out in her best dress of white and green and red, and was accompanied by her sweetheart, Rufus, a very large, black, powerful mill hand. Her name was Viola. She and Rufus went aboard the Queen.

As she approached the counter, she asked Hicks:

'Is you-all got any musk?'

'We sho' have — awful fine musk,' answered Hicks as he pulled down a large green bottle.

'Rufus, how much you gwine ter buy me?' she inquired.

'Well, you git whatever you want. I got plenty money,' answered Rufus, as he drew himself up to his full height.

'How-come you got so much money?' inquired another negro mill hand, who seemed to be a rival for the favor of the young girl in white, green, and red.

'I worked fer hit. That's how-come,' replied Rufus with disdain.



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‘Well,’ said Viola, ‘I reckon ef that’s the case, you kin give me ’bout six-bits worth, in a nice blue bottle, ef you-all got one. I sho’ does love them blue bottles.’

Hicks produced the blue bottle and filled the order. By that time the smell of the musk was strong enough to knock out a billygoat. Viola also bought six yards of red ribbon, a hair comb, a big bottle of snuff, several cans of sardines, and some big ginger cakes, which were about eight by four inches, scalloped all round the edges, and half an inch thick. All Rufus bought for himself was a ‘seegar,’ with which he received, as a kind of prize, a pure brass finger ring. The total price of the cigar and ring was a nickel. Rufus gave the ring to Viola.

As Rufus and Viola, arm in arm, walked up the bank, the rival again attempted to make trouble.

‘Say, nigger,’ said he, ‘you done got so much money, now ef you is a sho’-nuf dead game spote, jes’ step right up here an’ I’ll fate you right now.’

This was the most deadly challenge one negro could give to another. The proposal meant that each party was then and there to produce to public inspection all the money — gold, sil-



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ver, or paper — which at that moment he was carrying about his person. Whichever negro could show the most money would take all — both his pile and that of his adversary.

Rufus was somewhat stunned, but he could not allow his manhood, sportsmanship, and standing in the community to be thus trampled upon by his rival. He stepped forward and accepted the challenge.

A crowd gathered around and the two men began to pull out their money a dollar at a time. It was really exciting. We all held our breath, watching to see who would go down in defeat, and have his entire wealth wiped out at one blow.

Rufus produced twenty-six dollars and a half. His rival then showed a ten-dollar bill, which made his total thirty-six, and remarked that he had several hundred more in another pocket, as he scooped in the hard-earned funds which had just been emptied from the pockets of Rufus.

Viola was astounded. Rufus was a good loser. He made no sound or sign at all.

‘Rufus, honey,’ whispered Viola, ‘how-come you to let that nigger fate you that way?’

Rufus stood like a statue and hung his head. ‘I don’t know how-come,’ he answered.



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At this point the winner of the 'fate' caught Viola by the arm, and, shaking the big roll of money in front of her eyes, said:

'Come on wid me. Dat nigger done busted flat as a flounder. He can't buy you a shoe-string.'

'Take yo' hands offen me,' exclaimed Viola, 'you low-down, gamblin', cheatin', black ape! I bet you borrowed nearly all that money 'fo' we come outen de boat — and den play big man, and fate my Rufus, what works so hard eve'y day — all day long in de hot sun. You done cheat Rufus — dat's what you done done, an' you know what I'se gwine ter do to you, nigger?

'I'se gwine ter cunger you, nigger, you just wait and see. You see ef you don't git er pain in yo' right arm, so you can't never, never lif' hit to your mouth!'

Rufus walked on up the bank, his head and shoulders bent low. But around him hovered the faithful Viola. Her arm was around his neck, and in his ear she whispered sweet consolations.



## CHAPTER XXI

### *Brown's Cotton-Gin — Hamon at Baton Rouge*

UNDER the circumstances and since Hamon had again escaped us, we decided to push on down the river without delay. We left Bullard's band mill early that afternoon, intending to tie up for the night a few miles below at Brown's cotton-gin of which Tom and Henry Bullard had told us. They thought it would be a good place to sell goods and probably some one there could tell us whether Hamon's shantyboat had passed during the day.

We made a landing at Brown's gin about four o'clock, not more than seventy-five yards from the gin. We put out a number of lines, and Charley and I climbed the bank to look over the situation.

The gin was a large two-story corrugated-iron building, from which protruded a tall iron smokestack. There was a long line of wagons, with deep beds filled with cotton as it had been picked from the fields. Each wagon, in turn, drove under a large, jointed metal pipe about ten inches in diameter. This pipe was stuck down into the wagon and the cotton was



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quickly sucked up by air suction through the pipe into the gin-house and placed in a numbered bin. The cotton was then run through one of five or six gin-stands and the seed separated from the cotton. The cotton lint was carried by automatic conveyers into the lint-room and afterwards baled under great pressure in a large press, covered with cotton bagging, and bound with a number of flexible steel hoops. The bales were then weighed and marked with the owner's initials and rolled out onto a platform or often onto the ground near the gin.

The eyebrows, hair, and mustaches of the men working inside the gin-house were white as snow from the fine cotton lint with which the air was filled. It gave us the impression that it was Christmas, and that we met a Santa Claus at every turn.

Outside the gin-house were a couple of hundred negroes and some white people. Some were waiting to have their cotton ginned, but many had come there simply to see and be seen and to have a good time. Seated on a cotton bale, surrounded by a large circle of admirers, was a long-legged negro, who wore side burns and patent-leather shoes with white kid tops and red trimmings, touched off with a row of



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large pearl buttons. His trousers were very tight and he wore a long-tailed Prince Albert coat, which had probably withstood the heat of thirty summers. Around his neck he wore a very large black bow tie, and the top of his head was crowned with a little, flat, fawn-colored derby hat. He was picking a banjo in a manner that would have done credit to any musician. In fact, he held his auditors spell-bound. He was singing a song. I don't profess to be able to repeat his exact words, but some of it ran something like this:

Oh, see dat watermillion er smilin' on de vine,  
How I wish dat watermillion, hit was mine!  
De white folks dey am foolish, dey needs a heap er  
    sense,  
Or dey wouldn't lef hit smilin' fru de fence.

### *Chorus:*

Oh, de ham bone am sweet, an' de bacon am good, an'  
    de possum meat am very, very fine;  
But gimme, yes, gimme, oh, how I wish  
    you would, dat watermillion growin' on de vine!

When de dew draps, dey am fallin', dat million gwine er  
    cool:  
Den I know dat hit will eat most awful fine, an' I'se  
    gwine ter come an' fetch hit, or else I is a fool;  
Dat watermillion smilin' on de vine.



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Then he sang another one, the words of which I have forgotten, which started off:

Down in de canebrake, close by de mill,  
Dar live a yaller gal, name is Nancy Till.

Charley and I then woke up and began to think about business. We knew we had to make some kind of a fuss to get the crowd down to our store. Hicks had an old cornet that he could blow pretty well. We went down to the Queen and got Hicks out on the forward deck with his cornet and told him to blow reveille and retreat and charge and anything he knew, or didn't know.

We soon had the boat covered with a mob of customers. We sold them all kinds of things, but had many calls far beyond the limits of our stock, even to gold teeth and glass eyes.

All the time I had Hamon in my mind. One of the boys then told us that he had seen a shantyboat floating near the opposite shore early in the afternoon. Somehow I felt we could land Hamon behind the bars if we stuck to the job. I was afraid he would reach New Orleans and be lost in that metropolis. From New Orleans he could easily take passage on any one of thousands of local or foreign sailing or steam vessels, and we should probably never see him





OH, SEE DAT WATERMILLION ER SMILIN' ON DE VINE







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again. I was satisfied he had all that big pile of currency with him on his shantyboat. We wanted that reward and we meant to try our very best to get it. For this reason we decided to hurry on to Baton Rouge, stopping only at Natchez and a few landings to sell goods.

Our excitement can be imagined when I tell you that, as we floated into Baton Rouge early one morning, the first thing we saw was Hamon's shantyboat. He now had her painted coal black, but we all knew that boat instantly.

I was swept away by an uncontrollable impulse. I was determined, come what might, that this time I would follow Hamon and not lose track of him. I felt that I would carry this through, even if I lost my life in the attempt. I was only a boy, but I was getting tired of the way Hamon was running things, and I was going to 'give him the best fight I had in the shop.' John and Charley said they were with me to the limit.

It was agreed that I should shadow Hamon's boat that night, and, if I had a chance, slip on board and see what I could learn. We knew it was useless to try to have him arrested, as he never remained on his boat in the daytime at any landing, and, besides that, we concluded that, if Hamon was actually taken in custody



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by a local officer, we should get very little if any reward. We had tried the local officers, and Hamon always managed to escape. We decided we would try some new methods.

That night after supper I started out with my pockets full of biscuits and a bottle of water, determined to get some real information as to Hamon. I stumbled about the river-front for hours. I was afraid I might be arrested by a policeman for prowling about at that hour of the night, and when I heard any footsteps I hid in dark corners until all was quiet again. I spent several hours up in the grounds of the State Capitol overlooking the river, my eyes on the spot where Hamon's boat was tied up.

About midnight some one, whom I took to be Hamon, boarded the boat. I hid behind a pile of barrels on the levee and watched. I wanted to board Hamon's boat, but every little while Ginnie would come out and walk all round the boat. They were a pair of very wise and slippery crooks. I remained concealed among the barrels all night long, eating my biscuit and drinking the water from the bottle. I kept track of the time by a large tower clock, which struck all the hours and half-hours. When the clock struck half-past four, I arose and slipped aboard Hamon's boat. I lay down



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flat on the after deck, with my head at the crack under the door. As day was breaking, Hamon arose and began to dress.

‘I think that valley train for *New Orleans* leaves the depot up yander little after eight o’clock. When she pulls out this mornin’, I’m a-goin’ ter be ridin’ of her,’ said Hamon, as he put on his shoes. ‘You git you a good man to hope you bring the boat on down to *New Orleans*, and when you gits thar, you git somebody to write a letter fer you, and sind hit to me at the gineral delivery. Don’t say much in the letter, jist tell me where you is. I’m a-goin’ to take all this here you-know-what with me in this suit-case, an’ I ain’t never goin’ to let hit git out of my han’.’

That was enough for me. I quietly slipped off the boat and up the levee. I ran as fast as my legs could carry me to the Queen. After I had told John and Charley what I had heard, it was agreed that Charley, John, and I would board the train as soon as we saw Hamon go up the steps of the coach, and Hicks and Abe would bring the Queen on to the Crescent City. Copying Hamon’s plan, I told Hicks to write me at the ‘gineral delivery’ as soon as he arrived in *New Orleans*, and let me know where to find him and the boat.



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We put on our best clothes and gave Hicks a great many instructions. We made him swear with his hand on Charley's Bible that he would not drink a drop of liquor until the Queen was safe in New Orleans.

We had only a few hundred feet to walk to the depot. The three of us hid behind a pile of trunks and carefully watched for Hamon. He arrived early and boarded the smoker, carrying an old red pasteboard suit-case, which was tightly bound by a small rope about six times each way. We slipped round on the side of the depot next to the city and bought three tickets for New Orleans. We got over in a corner behind the lunch-counter and talked over the business we had in hand. We were afraid Hamon might leave the smoker and come back into the coach and see us. John suggested that there was a parlor car on the train. Charley immediately caught at this idea, and with big strides he walked across to the ticket window and said:

'Give me three seats in the parlor car for New Orleans, if you please.'

The ticket agent accommodated Charley with the three parlor-car tickets, and we went out of the depot on the east side, walked around the corner, and boarded the parlor car.



## CHAPTER XXII

*Trailing Hamon in New Orleans — We Capture  
Hamon's Suit-Case — Edgar Zwank Again*

It did seem strange to be leaning back in those big, soft, luxurious chairs after our rough life on the river. Our clothes were wrinkled and our skins were burned very brown by the sun, but we pretended we never rode any other way than in parlor cars, and leaned back and enjoyed ourselves as the train rolled along between the river on one side and the sugar cane on the other.

After what I had heard on Hamon's boat that morning, I was not afraid Hamon would leave the train before he arrived in New Orleans. I knew he was going there to hide in some dark rat-hole of a place, and make his plans to escape from the country as soon as Ginnie arrived.

We reached New Orleans about noon, and were at once engulfed in a great crowd of people, seemingly from the four corners of the earth. We had agreed that all three of us should follow Hamon — each separately and apart from the other — so that if one lost the



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trail, the others would still be in touch with him. We never walked together, but we all followed Hamon. We had arranged that if any one of us got lost from the others, he was to inquire the way to the post office and stay there until we were reunited.

Hamon seemed considerably confused and abashed by the big city. He came very near being run over several times. He just kept walking and walking. He never put the suitcase on the ground at all, but always held it in his hand, whether walking or standing. Every few minutes he would look down at the suitcase and finger the locks, to be certain they were still in place. We felt very certain about what he had concealed in his hand baggage. He strolled up Rampart Street, stopping to gaze in the windows of a great many pawnshops. Then he joined the tide of humanity flowing into broad Canal Street, where he seemed more bewildered than ever.

Finally Hamon wandered into the French quarter, between the Court-House and the old French market. The streets were narrow and the buildings very old. What had once been fine structures, decorated with the fancy cast-iron trimmings of a bygone age, now were grimy, forbidding hulks, inhabited by the low-



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est characters from the steamboats and the ocean vessels which lined the river wharves for miles and miles.

An old man with a brutal face stood at the foot of a dark stairway. He saw Hamon looking about in a bewildered way, and went up and spoke to him. After a little conversation, while we all watched intently, the old man took Hamon by the arm and led him up the stairs.

We walked past the stairway, and noticed that it bore a sign informing the public that good rooms were for rent above at two dollars per week.

We got together round the corner and held a consultation. We decided it would be too hazardous to follow Hamon into the rooming-house at once. We agreed that two of us would stay near by and watch the stairway, while the third member of our detective squad went off to get something to eat. We further made up our minds that as soon as it got dark we would all three go up the steps and rent a room.

We all felt much better after having eaten some creole gumbo with rice, and other things, in a French restaurant in Royal Street. Hamon did not come down the steps, so we knew he must have rented a room.

When it was dark, we pulled off our coats



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and collars and neckties, untied the strings of our shoes, and did everything we could to make it appear that we were poor boys. These precautions may have saved our lives, for I now believe there were men in that house who would have murdered any or all of us for a five-dollar bill. Charley had a rather large number of five-dollar bills in his leather bag, which was under his clothing and suspended from a string round his neck. We were in more danger when we tiptoed up those steps than we were when we faced the coal barges on the river in the helpless *Ocean Queen*.

At any rate, up the dark and ill-smelling staircase we went. It was a long and steep staircase. Those old buildings had very high ceilings. On the second floor we saw a dim light in one room, and out of this came the same old man who had taken in Hamon. We asked him how much he would charge for a room for the three of us. We soon made a bargain and paid him in advance. He put us in a back room on that floor, which contained two old broken-down beds.

We hung round the hall and doorway of our room until nine o'clock before Hamon came out. He went down the steps suit-case in hand and all three of us were right after him. We



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shadowed him to a restaurant and back. This time we located his room. It was on the third floor.

After a little discussion in our room, we went to the landlord and told him our room was unbearably hot, and that we wanted one on the third floor, where we thought it would be cooler. Luck was with us this time; the landlord gave us a room on the third floor adjoining Hamon's. As soon as our door was locked, we began to try to peep through the door leading into Hamon's room, but that old scoundrel had plastered up the keyhole and absolutely every crack, so that we could not see anything at all.

I am a little older now than I was then, but I still look back on that night as the most dangerous and delicate enterprise in which I was ever engaged. We all knew that, if Hamon discovered us, it was just about certain death. We scarcely dared to breathe, much less talk.

We kept absolutely quiet until some time in the morning. Maybe it was about three o'clock, but I really do not know what time it was. At any rate, Charley arose and stood on a table in his stocking feet and began to bore a hole through the door with the sharp point of a new knife he had. He worked awhile and then had me come up and relieve him. Little by little we



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finally worked a small hole through the panel near the top. But one can see a lot through a small hole.

A little while before daylight we heard Hamon get out of bed. John stood on the table and looked through the hole. He saw Hamon strike a match and light the lamp in his room. Then, as John afterward told us, Hamon went over and untied and tightened and retied all the rope on the suit-case.

John climbed down from the table and we all went over to the wall as far from Hamon's room as possible. John, whispering carefully, told us Hamon was preparing to go out and that he would, of course, take the suit-case with him.

'I'll tell you,' said John, 'how we'll fix the dirty crook. You see, I have here in my bag a section of the rope that was left over when we built the roof garden on the Queen. Let's tie this rope across the head of the stairs, on the third floor, about a foot above the floor, from banister to banister, and do the same thing at the head of the stairs on the second floor, and when this old thief next door comes out in the dark hall with his suit-case, he'll get such a tumble that it will shake tobacco crumbs out of his pockets that have been in there for



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twenty years, and I'm thinking he'll let go the suit-case too. About the time he gets up a good speed to run after his baggage he will hit the second rope. The three of us will be waiting at the foot of the stairs, and if we ever get our hands on that suit-case, just keep a-running. If we get separated, meet at the post-office at nine o'clock this morning.' This plan we adopted unanimously.

We took another look at Hamon. He was getting ready to leave the room. We went out silently into the hall, and on both the third and second floors John tied that sea-grass rope across the stairsteps from banister to banister, so it would catch Hamon about the middle of his shin bones. We tiptoed down the stairs below. John and I were on the sidewalk at the foot of the stairs. Charley was stationed on the second floor, at the foot of the stairs leading to the third story. The steps came down from the third floor to the street in a straight, steep line.

Hamon was very tall and bony and powerful, and his movements were quick, as he was of a very nervous disposition. That is what made him snap his jaws. We had scarcely any time to wait. Out came Hamon in a hurry.

He hit the rope — and how he did fall! It made us all jump!



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He fell like a tall tree, and hit flat. The heavy suit-case crashed on down the steep steps, and bounced over Charley's head, and came jumping down to the street. John caught it on the fly, and was off like the wind, while Charley scrambled down the stairs.

We could hear Hamon curse as he fell over the second rope. Charley and I followed John, running like Old Nick himself was after us.

We got to Canal Street in safety, and slowed down to a walk, as it was getting light.

We soon met a man, whom we asked to direct us to the express office. He told us how to go. It was some eight or nine blocks. We reached the express office all right, but it was so early that the only person we could find in the building was the negro janitor. In answer to our questions he told us the express office would open at seven o'clock, and that the agent would arrive about eight or half-past eight, but the superintendent would not get down until about nine or nine-thirty.

We decided to walk about a little and carry the suit-case with us. We told the janitor we should return at nine o'clock. We went over on Saint Charles Street, and as we threaded our way through the crowds on the sidewalk, we suddenly ran squarely into Edgar Zwank, the



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boy from Memphis who had called The Ocean Queen a 'little scow' and had spoken of giving me a job as a porter.

We walked up a side street and all of us sat down on some new timbers, near where a pile-driver was busy driving down long poles to make a foundation for a big building.

As the pile-driver kept up its steady, energetic, business-like 'swish — bang, swish — bang, swish — bang,' we told our story to Edgar and informed him we believed there was something like a hundred thousand dollars in that old red suit-case.

'And nobody knows you have captured all this money?' asked Edgar.

We told him no one knew we had the money — no one but Hamon.

'Well, of all the dumb-bells I ever met in my life! So you're going to turn in a hundred thousand dollars to get a five-thousand-dollar reward?' said Edgar. 'Say, listen, you idiots. This money might be marked or might be identified in some other way, but I know a party right here in New Orleans who can handle the whole matter for you. There are three of you and I'll make four and my friend will make five. We'll split it five ways, and each take twenty thousand dollars instead of the whole bunch of



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you greenhorns having to divide up a little old five thousand dollars. What do you say?’

Edgar was standing up then. I walked up to him and said:

‘This is the second time you have insulted me. Here’s what I say.’

I slapped his jaw with my open hand just as hard as I could hit him.

Edgar recoiled and exclaimed: ‘I’ll get even with you for that.’

‘You will, well, I’ll give you some more right now,’ said Charley, and he hit Edgar a blow that bloodied his nose, blackened his eye, and knocked him sprawling on the ground. Charley was a real boxer.

When Edgar got to his feet, he started to say something else, but John yelled:

‘Shut up and clear out from here! We don’t associate with thieves.’

Edgar turned red, and John Guheen gave him a terribly swift kick that assisted him no little in making his departure.

‘Swish — bang, swish — bang, swish — bang,’ pounded the honest, hard-working pile-driver — and we were carried off in the ever-flowing crowd toward Canal Street.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### *The Arrest of Hamon*

AT nine o'clock we were at the express office with the suit-case, still unopened, just as we had captured it when it came on its flight down the stairs. When the superintendent arrived and we were shown into his private office, we hardly knew how to begin, but by degrees we told him the whole story as best we could and asked him to open the suit-case.

The superintendent called in the agent, the cashier, and one or two others connected with the company. Then he cut open the suit-case.

The money was certainly there all right. It was crammed full of paper money in bundles. Some of the bills were of large denominations.

The superintendent said the first thing to do was to count the money. He divided it into two big piles and put the cashier to work on one, while the money-order clerk counted the other. It took them a long time to count it, but when they were through they announced that the total was just an even ninety-five thousand dollars. Hamon had stolen a shipment of one



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hundred thousand dollars and had made away with five thousand dollars.

‘Now the next thing,’ said the superintendent, ‘is to wire Superintendent Saunders at Memphis. He has had the matter in charge.’

He called in his stenographer and dictated a telegram which read about like this:

Supt. A. G. Saunders,  
Memphis, Tenn.

The sum of ninety-five thousand dollars in currency has just been turned over to me by three young men, William Tucker, John Guheen, and Charles Kerr, who state they captured same from Zeke Hamon. We will make every effort to apprehend Hamon. He is thought to be in this city.

In a little while Mr. Byrnes, the express company’s special agent, was brought in. We understood he had been with the company for many years, and was considered one of the best detectives in the business. We were charmed with Mr. Byrnes at first sight. He looked the part, and, besides, he had an unusually rich Scotch-Irish brogue to which it was a pleasure to listen.

Charley had a fine head for business. He saw the situation as it was and tried to fix it so all of us would get a share of the reward.

‘The company did not offer any reward for



## The Arrest of Hamon

the return of the stolen money,' said Charley, 'and I don't know what they will do for us in that regard, but I'm going to give you some information right now which I believe will lead to the capture of Hamon. He told Ginnie, his wife, to write him a letter to the general delivery at New Orleans, and all you have to do is to watch for him at that general delivery window and sooner or later you will catch him.'

'Right you are, me lad,' said Byrnes, 'that's the way to nab this bird. If we go nosing around his room, he's very liable to lamp us before we are able to make the pinch. And in that event he'll crawl aboard one of them ocean-going tramp steamers and we'd niver see him ag'in.'

So it was arranged that we should go to the post-office with Mr. Byrnes and fix the details of arresting Hamon when he called for his letter.

'And I want you young gentlemen to go to supper with me this evening,' said the superintendent. 'If you will meet me here at seven-thirty we will see what we can find to eat. I think you boys deserve something to eat after what you have gone through.'

We went with Mr. Byrnes to the post-office and told the general delivery men and the post-master all we knew about Hamon.



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‘Now,’ said Mr. Byrnes to the clerk at the ‘H’ window, ‘whenever any man calls for mail addressed to one Zeke Hamon, you are first to pull your handkerchief from your pocket and blow your nose good and hard as if you had a cold. But go right ahead and hand him the mail, and never bat an eye. And, furthermore, me lad, if you want to blow your nose when there is no Zeke Hamon around, be very careful to go back where we fellows on the outside can’t see you, or you’ll have us slipping the bracelets on some prominent citizen.’

At the request of the express company and the postmaster, the city furnished four plain-clothes detectives to stand in the post-office lobby with Mr. Byrnes and await the arrival of Hamon. This would give them a chance to relieve one another, but keep the window under surveillance every minute it was open.

We had not yet secured a room. We had no idea of going back to the foul hole where Hamon had led us. In fact, after putting him over the ropes and capturing the money, it would have taken a very strong inducement indeed to have caused us to go anywhere near there.

We left the post-office and walked across the square to Saint Charles Street and turned away from Canal Street. In a little while we saw the



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sign of the Y.M.C.A. extending out over the street. We thought that would be a good place to get a room. So we went in and paid for one in advance for a week. Our room was on the third floor; it was large and airy and cool with big oval windows that worked on pivots. We had the privilege of the shower baths in the basement without extra charge.

We cleaned up and put on the best we had and met the superintendent that evening. He took us over in the French quarter to a famous old restaurant. It would be impossible for me to make any attempt to describe the supper. All I can say is that the superintendent gave our waiter *carte-blanche*, and that there were about seventeen courses, and that it was the best meal I ever ate in my life. They brought things in there we boys had never heard of, but everything put in front of us promptly disappeared. At this meal we gave the superintendent further details of our trip and he laughed heartily at some of the incidents. He was a mighty fine man and had a sense of humor.

We spent the next several days seeing the many sights of New Orleans and calling at the express office for news. Mr. Byrnes had instructed us not to come about the post-office building at all, as Hamon might see us and be



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scared away. We were getting our mail at the Y.M.C.A. Hamon did not call for a letter, and Byrnes and the city detectives continued to wait.

One morning we received a very picturesque letter from Mr. Hicks telling us that he had arrived in New Orleans safely, and giving us his exact location. We at once went down to the Queen and found everything in good order.

The fact that we had a considerable portion of our stock still on hand worried us and we began to discuss the best means of disposing of it. We did not wish to attempt to sell anything without a license. We went up to the city offices and were told that a license could not be issued for less than a quarter of a year. That cost too much, and we did not expect to stay there 'a quarter of a year.' The clerk told us he could issue us a license by the day as an amusement enterprise, which also gave us the right to sell.

We went away and thought this over, and the next day we hired a quartet of New Orleans negroes who had been singing on an excursion boat. They played violin, bass violin, flute, and guitar. Their vocal music was also fine. We dressed them up as minstrels and took out



## The Arrest of Hamon

a license for six days. Then we had to arrange for a good 'stand.'

After a great deal of walking about in the hot sun, we got permission to operate at the wharf of a line of excursion steamers that tied up directly at the foot of Canal Street. The excursion people figured we would attract a crowd and help their excursion business.

I never had more fun than in those six days. We were visited by all kinds of people, rich and poor, and by the time our license was out, we had sold nearly everything.

We were a little surprised that Hamon had not yet called at the post-office, although there was a letter awaiting him. We thought perhaps he would never call, and maybe we should receive no reward for recovering the money, so we should get nothing for all the work we had done on this case.

'Hamon may have found his boat without going to the post-office,' observed Charley. 'He may have taken Ginnie and that other five thousand dollars and be halfway to Buenos Aires by this time.'

But 'the darkest hour comes just before the dawn.' The very next day a clerk from the express office came down to the Queen and informed us that Hamon was sitting in the



## The Adventures of William Tucker

superintendent's office, wearing a pair of Mr. Byrnes's bracelets.

We left the boat in charge of Abe. John, Charley, Hicks, and I started back with the clerk to the express office. When we walked into the superintendent's big sunny room, there sat the handcuffed Hamon, the most abject picture of misery and regret I have ever seen.

Mr. Byrnes whispered to us that he had put up no fight at all — that the officers had handcuffed him at the post-office window a few seconds after the clerk began to blow his nose with great violence.

There he sat, his head bowed, his hands in his lap, held together by the shiny steel — a perfect picture of the result of ignorance, vice, and an obstinate fight against organized society and the laws of the land. He was now broken and humble.

It seems the fall over the second rope had wrenched his back, so that he had not been able to get out of bed until the day he was arrested.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### *We Receive the Rewards and Reach Home Again*

THE officers got Hamon to do them the favor of reading to them Ginnie's letter, and a pair of detectives went out to the boat to escort her to the express office.

In about half an hour we heard a commotion in the outer office, and opened the door to learn the cause of the trouble. There was Ginnie Hamon, being shoved along by the two officers. Her hat hung on one side of her head, her hair was dangling in all directions, and snuff juice ran down the corners of her mouth. She took one good look round and saw Hamon and his handcuffs and she saw John, Charley, and me, and then her eyes rested on old Hicks.

'You here, too, you blue-nosed drunkard!' she shouted at Hicks. 'You low-down, boot-licking, two-faced spy! I hope you die with delirium tremens and go to hell an' stay thar fer four million years. I just wisht to goodness I could git my hands on you oncet.'

This was getting too strong for Hicks, and he knew there was plenty more to come. He arose and withdrew from the room, explaining to Mr.



## The Adventures of William Tucker

Byrnes that he didn't 'care to have no altercation with a crazy woman like that, who is liable to say most anything.'

The superintendent told us he had wired Superintendent Saunders at Memphis, as soon as Hamon was arrested, and had received a telegram in reply stating that Superintendent Saunders would arrive in New Orleans the next morning. We were asked to call at the express office at ten in the morning to meet him.

We did not sleep much that night. We had now given up our room and were living on the Queen. We sat up nearly all night talking about how we should report to Mr. Kerr and show him the money. We felt that we had fairly earned the five-thousand-dollar reward, and we also had quite a sum as profits from the store on the boat.

Promptly at ten in the morning we met our friend Superintendent Saunders in the express office. His voice could be heard all over the building as he congratulated us.

'Byrnes,' he roared, 'show the boys what you found on Ginnie last night.'

Mr. Byrnes reached in his pocket and pulled out a bundle of paper money.

'I have here,' explained Mr. Byrnes, 'forty-eight hundred dollars, which we got out of



## We Receive the Rewards

Ginnie's dress. She had it sewed tight and fast inside her dress, so it did not show inside nor out. We had her searched and they noticed the bump! Just to think, the pair of them only got away with two hundred dollars, and I think from what you say Hamon spent most of that in buying paint to disguise his shantyboat. They will get about twenty years apiece. Tell me, my lads, does crime pay?'

We all sat round a big table. Ginnie and Hamon were not present. They were then safely in jail. Mr. Saunders arose and with considerable formality made a mighty nice speech about the whole case and the part we had taken in it. He had the stenographer take down everything he said. I heard afterwards he sent a copy of his speech to the president of the company in New York. He wound up by saying that the company had not offered any reward for the return of the money stolen, but, in view of the great risk we had run in securing this stolen property, he had wired the general manager in New York, and had received a reply. With a graceful bow to us, and a wave of his hand, Superintendent Saunders continued:

'I have now great pleasure in presenting, by authority of the general manager, one thousand dollars each to Mr. Guheen, Mr. Kerr, and Mr.



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Tucker, as a small reward for their services in recovering the stolen currency from the train-robber Zeke Hamon, who robbed our safe on train No. 146 on the Missouri Pacific Railway, at —— Arkansas, on the night of —— ———.’

With that he pulled out three packages of new bills containing one thousand dollars each, and all three of us had to march forward, one at a time, and receive the money.

Superintendent Saunders then produced four large brown envelopes, containing twelve hundred and fifty dollars each, which he turned over to John, Charley, Hicks, and me, as the reward for giving information which led to the capture of Hamon. We three boys now each held in our hands twenty-two hundred and fifty dollars cash as reward of our efforts. We signed a number of vouchers as a record for the company, each of which gave a synopsis of the entire transaction.

I may as well tell you here that Hamon eventually was sentenced to twenty years in the Arkansas penitentiary at Little Rock, and Ginnie got fifteen years. Hamon had enough indictments for other crimes awaiting him to keep him imprisoned for another seventy-five or a hundred years.

The Ocean Queen showed some marks of



## We Receive the Rewards

damage from the collision with the coal barges, but we succeeded in selling her in New Orleans for three hundred and twenty-five dollars.

John and Charley and I had a talk and decided that the Queen might now be resting on a soft mud bank in a hundred feet of water at the bottom of the Mississippi, and we probably should never have captured Hamon, if it had not been for the brave and strenuous efforts of Abe. We thought we ought to be as liberal with him as the express company had been liberal with us. We therefore 'chipped in' one hundred dollars each and gave Abe a fine new leather pocket book containing three hundred dollars. Abe returned to Helena.

The last we saw of Hicks, he was in New Orleans, with a pocket full of money. He assured us he was going back to Iowa to build another shantyboat and stock it with goods, for after this experience on the Queen he thought he could make a comfortable living in a similar way.

We returned to Memphis by train. Superintendent Saunders gave Wag, Nanny Drury, Romeo, and Polly all a free ride home. He had a nice crate made for each of them, and each shipping tag bore the number of the superintendent's 'frank.' We reached home early in



## The Adventures of William Tucker

the morning. Then we did something I never have thought was very business-like, but we were only boys, and we could not resist the temptation to make a showing before Mr. Kerr, and all the other home folks.

We each had about twenty-five hundred dollars in currency as the total net profits of our trip. We waited until the banks opened and got a teller who was a friend of ours to change our money into bills of the smallest denomination possible. When we got through with the teller, each of us had an armful of money.

Charley put his money in a market basket, with a cover; John had his inside his shirt and he looked as if he had gained a hundred pounds, or had stuffed a pillow in his bosom. I put my money in a canvas bag which I borrowed from a seed store.

We walked into Mr. Kerr's office, each of us lugging our money. He was there and greeted us warmly.

Charley and I dumped our basket and bag of money out on a big table, and John began to unbosom himself. He seemed to be made of money.

The astonishment of our friends was all that we had hoped for. Of course, we had to tell the whole story, and it took us days and days to do



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that, but that first morning John and I sent for our kinfolks and left the money on the table until they all arrived.

There is one thing I have not been able to set down in this story. That is the melodious whistles of the steamboats on the Mississippi. We all loved to hear them blow, and always listened intently at any steamboat whistle far or near. The river men know most of the boats by the sound of their whistles.

Whether you are in the adult or juvenile class, if you ever have a chance to come to see me at my home in Kerrville, Tennessee, near Memphis, I shall be delighted to see you. For the boys and girls who honor me with a visit I shall have great pleasure in endeavoring to give an imitation of the whistles of the Mississippi River steamboats — and I'll also tell you how Hicks lost his leg, and let you play with Wag IV.

THE END











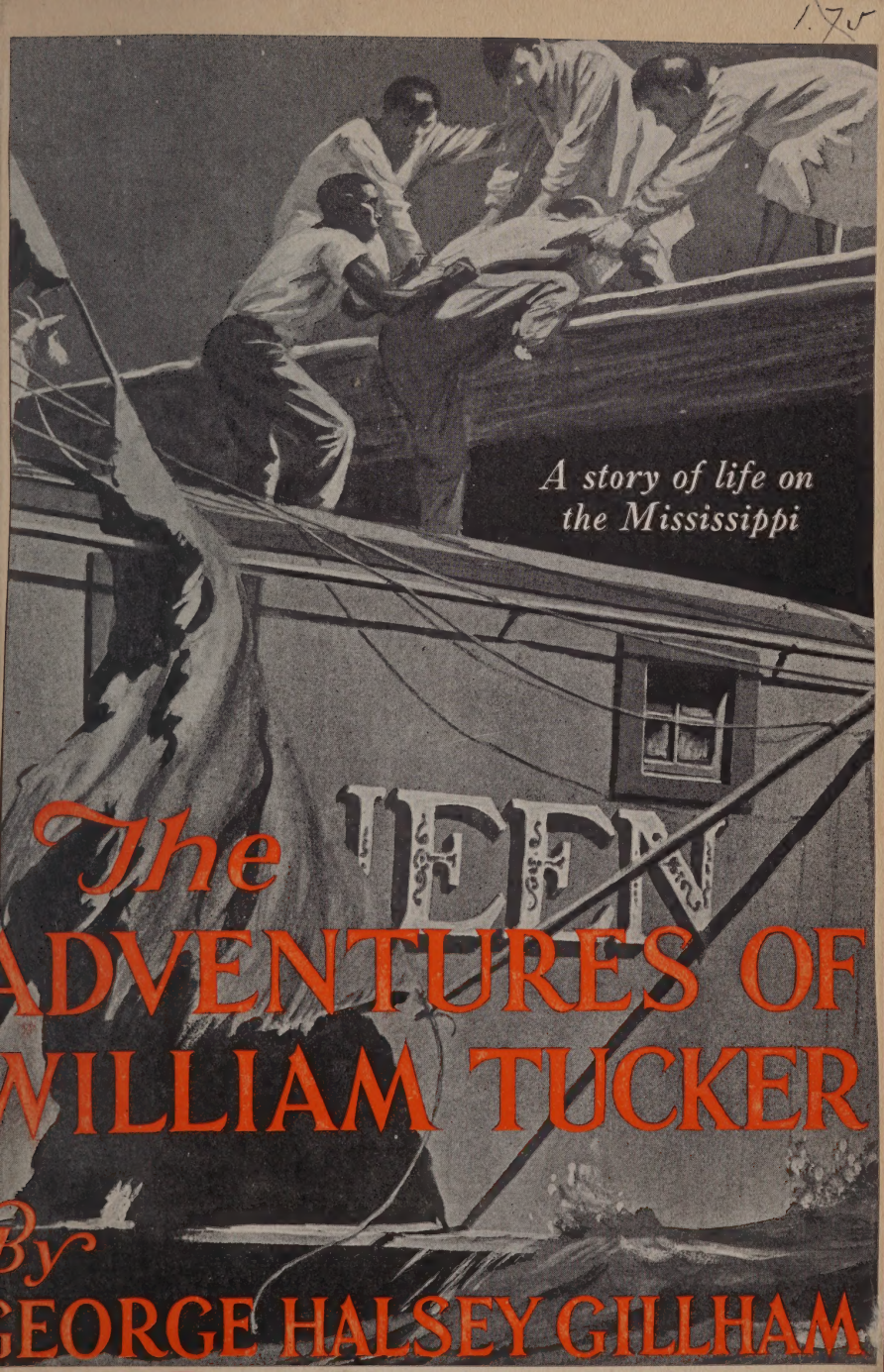
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A black and white illustration of a boat's deck. Several men in light-colored shirts and dark trousers are working together, possibly loading or unloading cargo. The boat's hull is visible, featuring a small window and the word 'TEEN' in large, stylized letters. The scene is set against a dark background, suggesting a night or a dark sky.

*A story of life on  
the Mississippi*

*The*  
ADVENTURES OF  
WILLIAM TUCKER

*By*  
GEORGE HALSEY GILLHAM







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# INDIAN STORIES

*By*

*James Willard Schultz*

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JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ, or Ap-i-kun-i, — to give him his Indian name, — went West in the '70's, joined a tribe of Blackfeet, and for years lived, hunted, and fought side by side with them. From these experiences he has drawn material for his books, which have been called 'the best of their kind ever written.'

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With the Indians in the Rockies  
Sinopah, the Indian Boy  
The Quest of the Fish-Dog Skin  
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Running Eagle, the Warrior Girl  
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